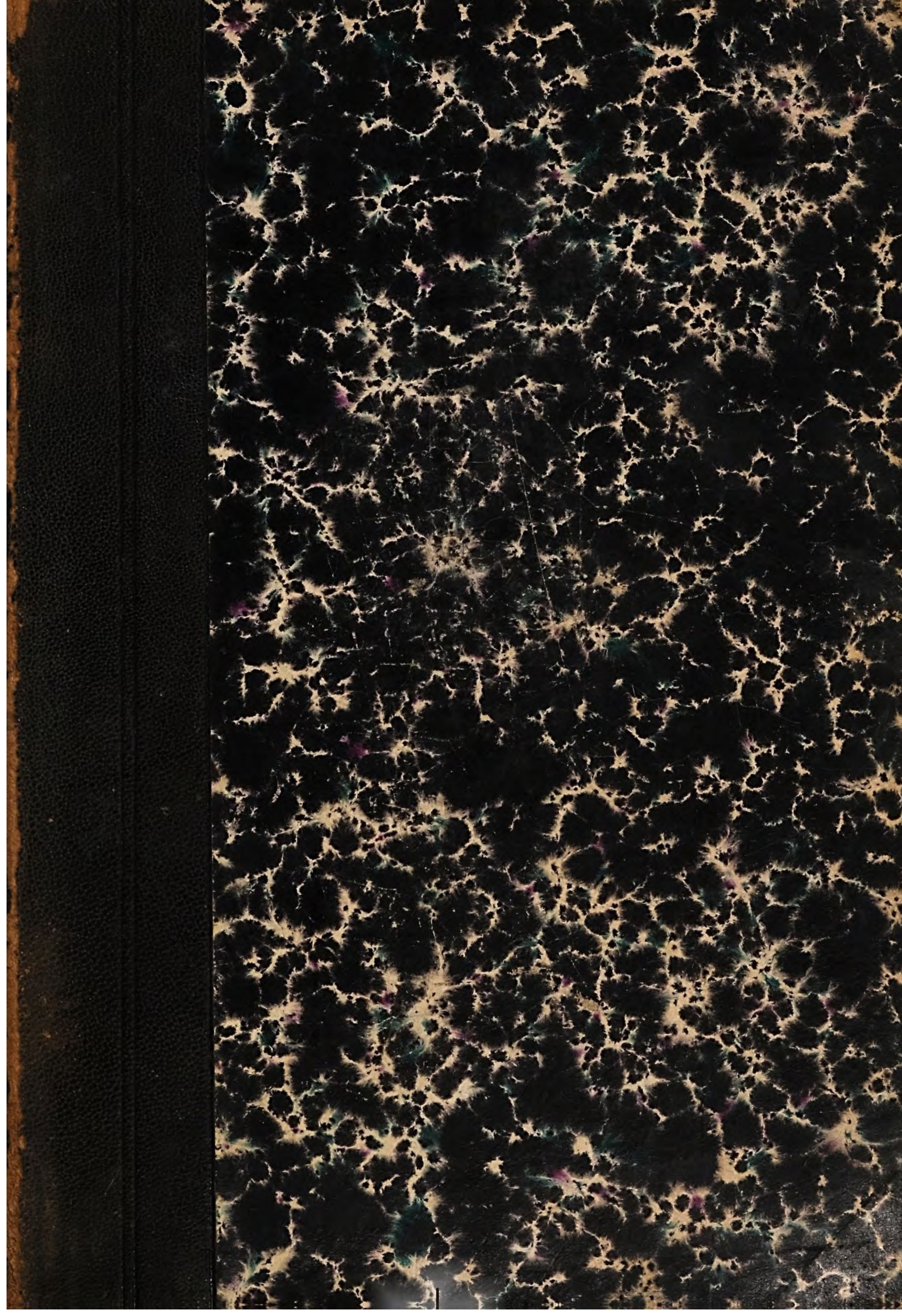




P. o. angl.

Philips

276 ♀

EACH VOLUME SOLD SEPARATELY.

P. o. angl. 276 7

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 3088.

A DEVIL IN NUN'S VEILING, ETC.

BY

F. C. PHILIPS.

IN ONE VOLUME.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

PARIS: C. REINWALD & CIE, 15, RUE DES SAINTS-PÈRES.

PARIS: THE GALIGNANI LIBRARY, 224, RUE DE RIVOLI,
AND AT NICE, 48, QUAI ST. JEAN BAPTISTE.

This Collection

*is published with copyright for Continental circulation, but
all purchasers are earnestly requested not to introduce the
volumes into England or into any British Colony.*

October 1895.

The "Novel Series."

Now ready:

The Story of Bessie Costrell.

By Mrs. Humphry Ward,
Author of "Robert Elsmere," "David Grieve," "Marcella."

Bound in Cloth. Price 2 *M.*

Lyre and Lancel.

By F. Anstey,
Author of "Vice Versâ," "A Fallen Idol," etc.
With Twenty-four Full-Page Illustrations.

Bound in Cloth. Price 3 *M.*

*The "Novel Series" is to be had of all Booksellers and
Railway Libraries on the Continent.*

Tauchnitz Edition.

Latest Volumes:

My Lady Nobody.

A New Novel by Maarten Maartens.
2 vols.

Celibates.

A New Work by George Moore.
1 vol.

The Gods, Some Mortals and Lord Wickenham.

A New Novel by John Oliver Hobbes.
1 vol.

(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 3088.

A DEVIL IN NUN'S VEILING, ETC. BY F. C. PHILIPS.

IN ONE VOLUME.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By F. C. Philips,

AS IN A LOOKING GLASS	1 vol.
THE DEAN AND HIS DAUGHTER	1 vol.
THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF LUCY SMITH	1 vol.
A LUCKY YOUNG WOMAN	1 vol.
JACK AND THREE JILLS	1 vol.
LITTLE MRS. MURRAY	1 vol.
YOUNG MR. AINSLIE'S COURTSHIP	1 vol.
SOCIAL VICISSITUDES	1 vol.
EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES & A FRENCH MARRIAGE	1 vol.
MORE SOCIAL VICISSITUDES	1 vol.
CONSTANCE	2 vols.
THAT WICKED MAD'MOISELLE, ETC.	1 vol.
A DOCTOR IN DIFFICULTIES	1 vol.
BLACK AND WHITE	1 vol.
"ONE NEVER KNOWS"	2 vols.
OF COURSE	1 vol.
MISS ORMEROD'S PROTÉGÉ	1 vol.
MY LITTLE HUSBAND	1 vol.
MRS. BOUVERIE	1 vol.
A QUESTION OF COLOUR, ETC.	1 vol.

By F. C. Philips and C. J. Wills,

THE FATAL PHRYNE	1 vol.
THE SCUDAMORES	1 vol.
A MAIDEN FAIR TO SEE	1 vol.
SYBIL ROSS'S MARRIAGE	1 vol.

By F. C. Philips and Percy Fendall,

A DAUGHTER'S SACRIFICE	1 vol.
MARGARET BYNG	1 vol.

A DEVIL
IN NUN'S VEILING

AND OTHER STORIES.

BY

F. C. PHILIPS,

AUTHOR OF "AS IN A LOOKING GLASS," ETC.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1895.



CONTENTS.

	Page
A DEVIL IN NUN'S VEILING	7
THINGS ALWAYS COME RIGHT IN THE END	109
MISS WEATHERLEY'S LESSON	141
JEAN, JEANNETON AND THE PERSONAGE	159
A SAD STORY	177
A WOMAN WHO EXPECTED TOO MUCH	191
IN THE MATTER OF SARAH BROWN	203
AN UNLUCKY RESURRECTION	217
PEPITA'S JOKE	231
A MAD ENGLISHMAN	245
AN UNLUCKY DOCTOR	259
NIPPED IN THE BUD.	275

A DEVIL IN NUN'S VEILING.

A DEVIL IN NUN'S VEILING.

CHAPTER I.

I AM seven-and-twenty, and in a week I shall be dead. Before I die I wish to set down the facts which brought me to this pass fully, and with the utmost candour. With so short a time to live I can have no motive to palter with the truth—no reason to make excuses for myself. Nothing can alter my fate now, and, having no family, it matters very little to me whether I am execrated after I am gone or not. Very well then; I write as a man who has nothing to gain, and nothing to lose. Let it be understood.

“My dear Guthrie,” said a friend of mine a year ago, “why don’t you marry? You are young; you

have accomplishments; women like you; and you'll never earn a sixpence—why don't you marry?"

I looked at him in surprise; marriage was an idea that had never entered my head. I took refuge in prevarication.

"So far as not earning sixpence goes," I said, "I have between three and four hundred pounds in the bank. Also I have a profession—I paint."

"How long will your money last you?" he demanded with a shrug, "and what does your profession bring you in? I think you told me your father left you two or three thousand pounds. That was eighteen months ago. By the winter you will be penniless, and the only things in your studio you will be able to sell are the rugs and the cabinet, and the odds and ends you have bought." He exhaled a whiff of his cigarette contemptuously. "*Si la jeunesse savait, si la vieillesse pouvait!* You will end like me, my friend—a shabby, out-at-elbows failure. But if *I* were *you*——"

"Well," I said. "If you were I? What then?"

"I should look to a rich woman, not to Art, to

secure my future," he added. "Bah. I am wasting my time—there never was anybody yet who profited by another's experience! Come and stand me a breakfast and we will talk of something else. You shall bore me about your 'Niobe' and your views, and the new school's 'methods,' and in gratitude for my breakfast I will be very amiable and tell you that you will be a great man. Let us go!"

Here you have the inception of the scheme that was so fatal to me—the germ of the step that proved my ruin. Does it sound ridiculous that a man could be influenced by a casual conversation of this kind? It is true, nevertheless, for, though I was not conscious of it at the moment, Laroche's words had sunk into my mind, and, at first vaguely, and by degrees more insistently, they recurred to me.

In the following months I laboured very hard. It was true that as yet I had earned nothing by my brush, and I hoped, by an unusual amount of industry, to make up for some of the time I had lost. As will have been gathered by the foregoing remarks

of my companion, my *atelier* had been furnished with an approach to elaborateness. I was perfectly sincere in my intentions, but I had not been able to resist the temptation that assails every young artist possessed of the means of gratifying it; and I am free to confess that there were moments when I perceived as clearly as Laroche himself that the luxuriousness of my abode was a little incongruous with the work that emanated from it.

However, as I say, I toiled indefatigably now; I began to economise. There were even weeks when I lived as penuriously as some of my friends in the Quartier Latin who could not help themselves. I went without ordinary comforts, and I strove as ardently as was possible to be an artist in the truest meaning of the word—to prove that those who denied, or smiled at, my talent had been wrong.

Well, it did not lead to much. My “Niobe” was finished, and unsold. I commenced another picture, and I was told, when I took an opinion upon it, that the composition was wrong. It was not Laroche this time, it was another man—a man

with a reputation, and much as I hated him for his obvious endeavours to be polite, I could not disguise from myself that his judgment impressed me.

"Tell me frankly, my dear friend," I said, "do you think that Art has any reward in store for me? I am not amusing myself, you know, I have got to live by my brush. What do you prophesy for me?"

He ran his fingers through his long hair, and shuffled:

"She is a hard mistress, Art," he murmured. "Where she yields to one, she leaves a thousand to die in misery. They, too, they love her, but she will not smile on them. Oh, she is as adamant, our mistress!"

"Yes, yes," I said, "but do you think she will be kind to *me*?"

"Who knows?" he answered. "I cannot say."

I persisted. "I *want* you to say; I want you to tell me exactly what you think."

"I think you have the right feeling," he replied. "All is said."

"No more? The feeling simply."

"The feeling, yes. But if you study, if you persevere, in years to come you may acquire—possibly—more of the technique."

"Thank you," I said. "Unfortunately I am not in the position to study for years, and sell nothing in the meantime. I shall look for another career, my friend; I have frittered away too many years as an artist already."

He made a gesture that was not consoling. There was assent in it; it even seemed to say that I had only my own conceit to blame for my mistake. After he went away I buried my face in my hands, and flung myself upon the couch—the couch with the bearskin rug that had been one of my extravagances—and cried that my life was over. Nobody can understand how I felt—chagrined, mortified, wounded in my very soul. My despondency endured for a fortnight. During the fortnight I did nothing whatever. I never picked up a brush, I sought no company, I lived a perfectly aimless life. At the end of the fortnight the next stage com-

menced—I plunged into a vortex of dissipation, on which it is unnecessary to dwell. In the third, and last stage, I began to think.

It was here I perceived how deeply Laroche's words had told, when he advised me to marry a wealthy woman, but whether I should have made the attempt had it not been for an accident, I cannot say. Personally I do not think it likely, for I knew no wealthy women. My female acquaintances consisted of some half-dozen models, a minor actress or two, and a few women who wrote or painted, and were a great deal harder up than myself.

The accident was this. Somebody lent me a novel, I forget what it was called, but it was the story of an adventurer, who passed as a man of fortune and won the affections of an altogether charming girl, who boasted the additional attraction of being an heiress. He was a scamp, the hero of the book, but he committed his deceptions so delightfully, and was so victorious in the end, that, so far from blaming him, one sympathised and smiled.

The idea occurred to me of posing as a man of

fortune myself. It must be remembered that I was in the most reckless frame of mind, and capable at the present juncture of being influenced like a straw in the wind. I do not say it to defend myself—on the contrary the scheme I contemplated was a villainy and I know it—but I wish it understood on what manner of soil the seed of suggestion had been thrown.

The dishonour of the plan did not daunt me—it even attracted me strangely. The spice of excitement that it promised was just such a stimulant as I required, and quite coolly, and without the slightest compunction, I commenced my preparations. Looking back at that time I marvel at myself, but then my conscience seemed asleep. I did not even feel that I should be a scoundrel—perhaps because all the details were not yet realised, and I only saw the proceeding as a dazzling whole—and I was, strange as it may sound, exceedingly happy in the week or two that had to pass before my departure from Paris could be made.

I advertised my effects for sale, and before the

auction took place I went to a fashionable tailor, and gave him an order for several suits of the most desirable description. A hosier, a hatter, a boot-maker were all visited in turn. Laroche, who asked me what I meant by my sudden leave-taking, was the only person I took into my confidence, and to him I explained my intentions in full.

"I mean to follow your advice," I said. "I mean to marry a rich woman."

He started a little, and then laughed loudly.

"I congratulate you," he exclaimed. "Who is she, where did you meet her?"

"I have not met her," I answered; "to be explicit, I should say I am going on the warpath—heiress hunting; and I am going to pass myself off as a young fellow of independent means."

I had already one of my new suits on—it fitted me admirably—and Laroche looked at me with approval.

"For once you are practical," he condescended to declare. "Where do you go?"

"Some watering place—Paris is thinning—and

besides in Paris I should have no chance of obtaining introductions. I think I shall favour Dieppe—I was once there, and the women were lovely, I remember.”

“You look well,” he remarked, scanning me afresh; “I should say your chances were good, but you surprise me, nevertheless.”

“Surprise you—and why?”

“You take the matter with a *sang froid* I have not hitherto observed in you. I approve, *bien entendu*—I have no scruples, I!—but you, I have always found, were disposed to obtrude your conscience on the most trivial occasions with a pertinacity that was sometimes a little wearisome. Yet now you meditate what is a decided swindle with the most absolute, the most light-hearted gaiety.”

It was true. I was astonished at myself, and I could find nothing to reply.

“However,” he continued, “let me hear more; how will you go to work?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “You are my mentor; what do you advise?”

"Well, certainly," he said, "you should go to the best hotel. I suppose you meant to do so?"

"Yes," I said. "I intended that."

"And if you find that the field looks well, you should live with some display. It will draw attention to you."

"My capital is not large," I reminded him; "I must economise to some extent."

"Nothing of the sort—that would be the most fatal of mistakes. The less time your capital places at your disposal, the more use you must make of it. Myself, I think you would do better to choose Trouville; still, go to Dieppe if you like."

"Yes," I said. "I incline to Dieppe, I have a fancy that it will be lucky to me."

"And when you get there——?"

"When I get there," I said, "I shall of course ascertain without delay what visitors there are, and who are the ones best worth my attention."

Laroche clapped me on the shoulder.

"Lucky fellow," he exclaimed, "go in and win! When you have married a millionairess, and you

come back here and have your suite of apartments at the 'Bristol' or the 'Grand,' and drive in the Bois behind your five-hundred-guinea bays, don't forget that you have an old friend living on the left bank, in a dirty street, *au cinquième*. He will be pleased to see you. Give the address to your coachman, when you are out one day alone."

There was a touch of earnestness in the jocularity of his tone that appealed to the sentiment there is in me, and, contemptible knaves as we were, I wrung his hand and he responded, with the fervour of a pair of heroes. More than that, I asked him to dine with me at Ledoyen's the following night, to bid me *bon voyage*.

Need I say my invitation was accepted? Though I had no means of knowing, I would have bet a thousand francs that Laroche went without a lunch next day that he might do better justice to the *menu* I placed before him, a *menu* that did not fail to include the *saumon à la sauce verte* without which a dinner at Ledoyen's would be incomplete.

It was a delightful evening. My arrangements

were all completed; my money had been withdrawn from my banker's hands, and transferred, together with the sum of fifty pounds—the amount my furniture had realised—to my note case. My pulses now throbbed with a new exultation, and I looked forward to the morrow with an excitement I no longer attempted to restrain. That it was a fraud I perpetrated I scarcely recollected; I thought of it for the most part as a daring adventure, and when I reflected that my heiress might be witty, and beautiful, and altogether a charming companion, the only alloy to my perfect satisfaction was an impatience to be gone.

It was hot that night, and as soon as we had done our dinner we turned into a *café chantant*, where we sipped our coffee and liqueurs, and smoked peacefully under the trees. For my part, however, I did not concern myself with the stage, or listen to the songs, though Yvette Guilbert was at her best. My mind was full of anticipation, and beyond the footlights I beheld, in imagination, *une grande dame*, superb as a queen, before whom I should fall pros-

trate, and who, in her turn, would fall in love with me, and seal my fortunes by her acceptance of my suit. It was an adventurer's mission on which I was setting out, but I embarked on it with much of the romantic enthusiasm of a boy. After I parted from Laroche I went home, but failed to sleep, and shortly after breakfast next day I took the train to Dieppe.

CHAPTER II.

THE sun was shining in Dieppe, and the sea sparkled brightly. After I was installed in an hotel, whose prices made me open my eyes, I went for a stroll, and paid for a week's admission to the Casino. The Casino was crowded; women were everywhere—blondes, brunettes, tall, *petite*, stout, slim, pretty and plain. A babel of all languages assailed my ears; English perhaps—which despite my long residence in Paris, still came most naturally to me—predominating. I had not been on the Terrace twenty minutes when I saw a girl who instantly

riveted my attention. She was with a woman who was presumably her mother. Dropping into a chair in their vicinity, I amused myself by watching her unobserved. I say I "amused" myself, because at that stage I had no idea of ever making her acquaintance. She was, however, so extremely lovely, that I had a very good excuse for admiring her until I had the opportunity for encountering a more substantial attraction. That could not be until I returned to my hotel, and descended to the table d'hôte. In the meantime——

Let me briefly try to describe her. She was, or she looked, at most three-and-twenty, and she was dressed in a costume of the palest pink—the material called "Nun's Veiling." Her complexion was adorable, and her eyes were the grandest blue-grey eyes I have ever seen. Her hair was of a very fair brown, and there was—I hardly know how to express it—an air of innocence, almost of childishness, about her, extraordinarily fascinating. She had something of the appearance of a schoolgirl very fashionably attired, so that when she glanced down

at the lilies of the valley that she wore, or settled her long suède gloves, you felt prompted to exclaim— “Oh, you darling, don't worry yourself; you look like a dream, little one, I assure you, you do!”

Imagine my delight that evening at finding her mother, much be-diamonded, sat next me at table, my incognita being on the other side! Faithful to the programme I had laid down for myself, I ordered Burgundy and champagne. My clothes were irreproachable, and my button-hole had cost me two francs. If I had had ten thousand a year I could up to the present have looked no more important, or done anything else. I was a little mortified to observe that nobody paid me any particular attention, and it was with a slight sinking of the heart that I felt that my outlay had been wasted.

Nevertheless I braced myself up, and, scanning the company, attempted to decide whether any other of my neighbours was better worth attention than the little girl who had so strongly attracted me at first sight. I was happy to see that nobody else was better dressed, or conveyed a greater impression

of prosperity than the mother and daughter. I was "happy" because I had hoped it would be so. I wanted to do the best I could for myself, but the girl was irresistible, though as yet I had not spoken a word to her.

After a little the elder lady addressed some trivial remark to me. A conversation ensued. She inquired if I had been long in Dieppe; I said I had but just arrived, adding that I was travelling as a distraction.

She was American, and it was easy to understand that their circumstances were quite as good as I had assumed. She hated Europe, she said, but her husband had insisted on her coming, in order to bring their child. He was devoted to the girl—she was the apple of his eye—and "I had to obey," she explained with a good-humoured laugh.

After dinner we continued our chat in the garden. Their name was Fawcett. So far as good breeding would allow, she seemed surprised that it was not familiar to me when she spoke of it. Evidently Mr. Fawcett was a personage. The daughter

joined us, and I was introduced. I passed half-an-hour most agreeably, and flattered myself when I bowed myself away, that I had made some impression. More than that, I did not attempt to disguise from myself that I was in love.

It may be credited or not, but my first thought when I woke next morning was that Miss Fawcett and I were going to meet, and when we did so, she did not seem averse to my society. That I owed her mother's complaisance to the mistaken estimate she had formed of my position—or, to be exact, to the deception I had practised on her—I did not ignore, but it seemed to me, and I was entranced to find it so, Mamie Fawcett herself liked me a little for my own sake.

I spent money at this period lavishly. I was perpetually devising drives and picnics and excursions, and I made so bold on one occasion as to offer the girl a bouquet. She accepted it with a sufficient show of self-consciousness to gratify me; yet I was far from feeling confident as to her answer were I to put my fate to the test already. Did she,

or did she not, care for me enough to be my wife if I asked her? I could not say, and I resolved to defer the momentous question from week to week. She liked me, but did she love me? The girlish tones told me little when we talked together, and as the spoilt child of a wealthy American, she must have seen many men at her feet before I came across her. I could not hope to be the first—to dazzle her by the novelty of adoration was out of the question.

One night there was a ball at the Casino, and I danced with her. She had never seemed to me more beautiful—indeed in every frock she wore—and she had on another every day—she looked more intoxicating than in the last.

“This will be the only time I shall valse with you,” she said as the music stopped. “Mamma has decided to leave Dieppe the day after to-morrow.”

I heard her with consternation.

“You are going away?” I faltered. “It is very sudden, is it not? Mrs. Fawcett did not mention it when we were talking together this morning.”

"She only made up her mind this afternoon. She thinks of going on to Trouville. You know I have never been in Europe before, and I want to see as much of it as I can."

"You are glad to go, then?" I asked.

She did not answer. It was the greatest encouragement she had ever given me. Through the huge windows we could see the moonlight on the Terrace, and I begged her to let us find seats out there, where it would be pleasanter.

"If you like," she murmured; "it would be cooler, would it not?"

We took chairs—or rather I selected them—facing the sea, and at a little distance from the rest. She sank into her place silently, and I folded her cloak, which had slipped a little, closer about her shoulders.

"Then you are glad to go, Miss Fawcett?" I repeated.

"Glad?" she echoed, "why should you think that?"

"You are anxious to see Trouville; and there

is no reason why you should regret to leave Dieppe."

She lifted her eyes to me. It was only for an instant, but they sent the blood coursing through my veins like fire. They told me I had misjudged her—that she would be sorry to say "good-bye."

"Mamie," I cried, "speak to me, say you care for me a little!"

"Mr. Guthrie?"

"I love you," I went on passionately, seizing her hand, "I love you as I never loved a girl in my life. You *are* my life—I can't live without you! Darling, you will have pity on me, won't you? You won't make a man worship you as I do, and then say you are indifferent to him? Mamie, I implore you——"

Her figure yielded—I don't know how it was—until my arm encircled her. I felt she trembled, and *I* trembled too. Then she looked at me again, and our lips met in a long kiss.

When she spoke again she said:

"Take care, people will see."

I drew back, and we sat decorously apart once

more, but the world had been turned to heaven to me in that kiss, and now her very voice had a caress in it.

"I have wondered so, if you cared for me!" I murmured. "I tried to see, and you wouldn't show!"

"Wouldn't I?" she said softly. "I was afraid I showed too much."

"How long?" I asked. "When did you first——"

She shook her head.

"I don't know."

"But—sweetheart, do tell me?"

"I am ashamed," she said in a delicious whisper.

We sat there talking under our breath for a long while, longer she declared than was "at all proper." When I took her back to the rooms it was arranged I should speak to Mrs. Fawcett on the next morning, though she declared I need have no alarm for the result.

"Neither mamma nor papa would deny me anything," she said. "Arnold, let me tell you a secret—I love you!"

I bade her good night. I asked no more of fate. I was the happiest man in the whole world.

Her mother received me warmly when I presented myself, and, while she added that she must cable to the States for her husband's sanction, she too assured me that I need have no fear that it would be refused. When I saw them again, I heard Mr. Fawcett's reply had been received. I did not see it, but it was entirely satisfactory, I was told. The most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my life, and I, Arnold Guthrie, were engaged.

My one terror now was that her father might come to Europe and make searching enquiries into my position, and I begged Mamie to let our engagement be a very short one.

After much solicitation I prevailed upon her to promise to marry me in three weeks. Her mother screamed when she heard it, but we laughed her into compliance. For three weeks, like Mahomet's coffin, I hung between heaven and hell. Towards the end I could neither eat nor sleep. The nights were an eternity. The thought of the rapture that

lay in store made my brain swim. When I touched the girl's hand my pulses beat like sledge-hammers, and there were even moments when I asked myself whether the delirium of ecstasy that awaited me might not destroy my reason when it came. It seemed incredible, too much for me to realise collectedly. I was going to find myself with a wife who was half a child and half a goddess. No words I could ever use could convey a tenth part of the enchantment of this girl's presence. I turned dizzy when I allowed myself to foretaste my joy.

Well, nothing came between us, and we were married.

It had been my whim to take her to Trouville—the place to which she had 'purposed going without me—and at Trouville I passed a week impossible to suggest.

I was mad with delight and worship. She exceeded my wildest expectations. We bathed together, and when she emerged from the sea I dried her adorable little feet with my kisses. I made sketches of her; yes, verily, I was "mad."

How far I was from suspecting the blow that was to fall!

One afternoon I observed an inexplicable change in my wife's demeanour. She seemed ill at ease and nervous. We were in the sitting-room of our hotel, and watching her from where I sat, I noticed that she appeared to be several times on the point of addressing me, and that either she changed her mind, or that her courage failed her. At last she rose, and coming over to my chair, she said abruptly:

"Arnold, my dear boy, there are one or two matters I want to speak to you about. The fact is I need some money."

"My child," I exclaimed, "how forgetful I am! Here is my purse, take all you want."

"I want more money than is in your purse," she said harshly. "The post has brought me some bills, and they have got to be paid, or there will be trouble."

I felt my heart sink. I had meant to postpone my confession to her till the latest possible moment,

and now she herself was bringing our paradise to a sudden close.

I took both her hands in my own, and drew her down on my knee.

"Mamie," I said, "if I were to say to you, 'My wife, I am very guilty—I have deceived you—but I love you, love you with all my soul,' what would you answer? Would you forgive?"

I think it must have been fully a minute that she sat there looking down at me, with her cheeks going whiter and whiter. She never spoke; she just sat staring at me, with the colour dying out of her face.

"Good God!" she exclaimed at last. "You have nothing—you have fooled me!"

She sprang up, and began to pace the floor excitedly. I did not recognise her; she was a different woman. Her hands were clenched, and beat her sides. Her eyes looked hatred at me. She terrified me—the transformation was so intense. I had looked for tears and reproaches, but this—this devilry of rage was appalling.

"Mamie," I cried, "forgive me! Yes, it is true, I have nothing but a profession—but I will work for you, there is nothing I would not do for you. You are dearer to me than life itself. Call me an adventurer, what you will! I have deceived you, I have acted infamously, but for Heaven's sake don't doubt my sincerity; my love has been true enough—my love is real, I swear."

"My God!" she gasped again; "my God!"

I crossed to her, and caught her to me, compelling her to be still.

"Mamie, speak to me. Say something. This is horrible! If you were poor, I swear it to you, I should love you just the same. I meant to marry a wealthy woman—I plotted to do so—but it isn't your money now—as Heaven hears me it isn't!—that makes me speak so to you. It is you yourself—you—you—you. Believe me!"

"Believe you? You idiot, you fool," she leant against me, choking, struggling to get free. "I have no money. I am as big a fraud as yourself—we have tricked each other! Let me go!"

"What?"

"I have nothing—do you understand? I took you for a rich man, I married you because I thought you were a rich man; it was a rich man I came to Europe to secure, and I've been the prey of a rascal! Let me go, I say, your arms hurt me!"

They dropped to my sides, and I fell back, eyeing her in stupefaction. Was I dreaming?

"Your mother," I muttered. "Your parents?"

"I have no parents—my mother, as you thought her, was a woman whom I hired to play the part. You beast, you beast, I loathe you! Don't come near me—I will not live with you another day, do you hear? I have spent three thousand dollars on this chance, and you have ruined me."

"Mamie," I cried, "Mamie! But I love you!"

It was true. Impossible as it may seem, I detested myself more intensely in the face of her revelation, than I should have done had the scene ended as I had expected it to end. She, like myself, was a "shark"; like my own, her mission had been to prey upon Society, and I had ruined her.

I felt the most poignant, the most acute remorse, and worse than all, a pain had gone through me like a knife when she declared that her affection had been only a pretence.

She threw herself on the couch, and, with my senses whirling, I strove to realise all her words had meant. Her innocence, her girlishness? Simulated—a mockery—gone for ever! But she was my wife, and I loved her; we must face the future together, and learn to pardon each other. I could not part from her. I went over to her—I knelt beside her, and touched her hand. In vain. This girl I had married was adamant.

“I will not live with you another day,” she repeated doggedly; and it was all the answer I could obtain until some hours later.

The evening passed in dreadful silence; neither spoke, nor even descended to the table d’hôte when the gong sounded. She lay motionless on the sofa where she had flung herself; I sat buried in thought in an armchair beside the hearth. The only sound

in the room was the clock when it struck—ten—eleven—twelve.

I rose and approached her again.

“Mamie,” I said, “this can’t go on. We must arrive at an understanding, dear. We have both behaved wrongly—as a matter of fact neither of us has much right to condemn the other. I am fonder of you than anything under Heaven—let us stick together, and (if I’m such an awfully bad bargain) try to make the best of it, sweetheart. What do you say?”

“Marriage is my only chance” she moaned. “I must be free, I *will* be free! I do not count myself your wife.”

“What do you mean?” I faltered. “You will marry again?”

“Certainly. We must bid each other ‘good-bye,’ and go our separate roads, just as if we had never been husband and wife at all. Isn’t it better for you too? What do you want?”

“I want you!” I answered.

“But”—she turned to me eagerly—“you will

not stand in my light? You will not make me curse the day I met you? Come, if you are reasonable, there is not any irreparable harm done after all. You love me. Well, I have been yours for a week. Let us shake hands, and part."

"I can't," I cried, "Mamie, I can't! God knows if I heard you were married again I would not spoil your happiness by so much as the lifting of a finger. If you *were* married again! But to see you go, to leave you, loving you as I do—it is beyond me!"

"You are very stupid," she murmured impatiently; "I have no patience with you. Now look here; I am an adventuress, my one aim in life was to secure a rich husband, and you have spoilt my chance. You admit that?"

"Mamie, I love you!"

"Answer me," she said irritably. "You admit it?"

"I admit it," I replied. "Well?"

"Well, you cannot be so unjust as to suppose that, whether I am willing or not, I shall resign myself all my life to suffer for the deception you have

practised. That would be monstrous! You have injured me enough already; the least possible thing you can do in atonement is to restore me my freedom."

I wrung my hands. Her callousness frightened me. "How can I?" I demanded, "how can I? You know it can't be done!"

"Offer no opposition," she said, "and it shall be done—indeed I shall hold myself free in any case. Only,"—her eyes, that I was never able to resist, fastened themselves upon me with something like tenderness—"only there is a way, Arnold, by which we might remain together until the right time—the rich man—comes."

I clasped her to me. "How?" I enquired, "How?"

"If we travelled as brother and sister (it need never be found out that we were anything else) I could stay with you—just as you wish. Perhaps it may be a year—perhaps even longer. But when the end arrived—you, too, might marry, if you wanted to—you would be my brother and give me

into my *fiancé's* arms with a fraternal blessing. That or nothing," she added harshly, as I shrank back; "that, or I leave you to-night—at once!"

It was to this *lâcheté* she had suggested that I lent myself.

CHAPTER III.

No sooner had she gained her way than my wife's serenity returned in full. We left Trouville on the morrow, and crossed to England. She desired to make a stay in an English watering place, and though I personally would have asked nothing better than to pass some months with her in the quietest spot discoverable, I dared not gainsay her when she expressed a preference for Brighton.

Our combined capital amounted to a little over two hundred pounds, and it was with no slight dismay therefore that I heard she intended taking rooms in an expensive hotel. My own adventurous days were over, and I was anxious to study economy now, and to live in a reasonable fashion. She, on

the other hand, never lost sight of the intention she had expressed for a moment, and, when I remonstrated, reminded me of it with a certain surprise:

“I shall find no husband in furnished apartments at thirty shillings a week, my dear boy,” she said. “It must be an hotel, of course.”

This was the sort of thing to which, bitterly humiliated, I had to resign myself every hour now. We were scarcely settled than I was painfully conscious that my wife was on the alert already, and the manner she adopted to me in public admirably sustained our supposed relationship.

Before we had been in Brighton a week “the beautiful Miss Guthrie” had half-a-dozen men in attendance on her, of which two at least were indisputable *partis*, and I was compelled, in the capacity of her brother, to witness her flirtations with an air of *sang froid* or genial calm. It often devolved upon me to efface myself, and leave my wife *tête-à-tête* with one of her cavaliers. She would give me a little glance, that I dared not disobey,

and then I would lounge away to chew my cigar in a frenzy of jealousy, while she remained—the type of girlish innocence—listening to the compliments of some fellow whom I was assisting to rob me of the woman I loved. It was an enviable position.

Yet, there were compensations. When we were alone she would drop the mask—or change it for another, perhaps I should say—and be once more the adorable little Mamie who cared for me, and me alone.

“What a bother it all is!” she would yawn. “And, oh, how bored they leave me! Come and give me a kiss, Arnold, and bring me a cigarette, and let us be ourselves for a change. I am tired of being somebody else. I should like half a bottle of champagne.”

Then I would order the champagne, and my wife would chat with me.

Perhaps I made so bold as to confess I felt jealous, but this disturbed the harmony of our reunion, and she rebuked me for it, and was colder for the next ten minutes.

"You are nicer than Julia," she would say—Julia was the creature who had posed as her mother—"and it is much jollier coming up here to you than it was talking to her. The only drawback about it is, that you are too much in love with me, Arnie; do be *conveniently* in love, little man, and we shall find it work ever so much better, we shall indeed."

What a woman! And all the time her face had the transparent freshness, her eyes the engaging clearness, of a child's. Lolling there, opposite me, in her pale blue wrapper, her tiny slippered feet perched upon my knee, there were moments when she did not look eighteen—in fact, she looked like a school-girl masquerading. Have I used that simile before? It is one that often occurred to me in connection with her. It is very likely.

Until we had been in Brighton a month none of her flirtations assumed any serious conditions, but then there came to the hotel a certain Captain Berkeley Forrester, who, I was perfectly convinced, meant matrimony. He was in escort on her con-

stantly. We never went out but we encountered him, and whether it was on the parade or in the town, or at church parade on the sea-wall, he would not fail to attach himself to us, obviously finding me *de trop*, and taking little pains to conceal it.

Mamie, too, found me *de trop*, more so than before, and I was now compelled to retire from the hall or the conservatory, as the case might be, with exasperating frequency.

Loving her as I did—my passion for her was absorbing—what the situation was to me may be imagined, and my chagrin here was so very apparent, that she appeased me by a lie. She said she did not mean to accept Captain Forrester if he proposed to her.

I looked at her in surprise; I wanted to believe, but it was very difficult.

"If you have no intention of accepting him," I demanded, "why do you encourage him as you do?"

She hesitated, and the next instant she answered in the most natural tone in the world:

"How on earth can you say such a thing? You

don't really think that I encourage him, do you? You must remember I am playing the part of a single and an unsophisticated girl, and if I snubbed a handsome man who offered me attentions it would look very extraordinary."

"But——"

"But I am not an unsophisticated girl, my dear Othello, and Captain Forrester's position is not by any means the kind of thing I am aiming for. You may take it as an honest truth that I have no more intention of becoming Captain Forrester's wife than I have of marrying the lift-attendant, or our waiter. Does that satisfy you?"

It did not.

"We all know who Captain Forrester is," I demurred; "his position is excellent, and he has great expectations. What you say sounds nonsense."

She threw back her head haughtily, and turned her eyes to the mirror over the mantel-piece, contemplating her reflection.

"I don't think," she said, "with all your extravagant declarations of affection, that you altogether

realise I am an exceptionally lovely girl, Arnold. Not a 'beautiful girl,' there are lots of 'beautiful girls,' but a girl with a face that is remarkable. A girl with an appearance like mine may hope to be a duchess. My manner is very nice too—I have what is called an 'attractive' manner; and my voice is pleasant even when it only utters inanities. As a matter of fact I seldom say anything brilliant, I know it; but confess that the first evening you met me you went upstairs with the firm conviction that I was as clever as I was charming, though, if I remember rightly, we talked about nothing but the weather, and the cake-shops in the Grande Rue."

"I fell in love with you the first five minutes," I said, "and I have been in love with you ever since. If I were an Emperor, you should be an Empress. I wish to Heaven I were!"

She smiled pensively.

"And so do I," she said softly, her annoyance melting, "because—shall I tell you something?—I like you better than any man I have met. Yes, I do, in spite of everything! If we were well off——"

She stopped, and sighed. She had said everything, without saying it.

"Ah, Mamie," I cried, "why not let our life together last, though we are poor? Darling, give up your idea of leaving me! We will take an *appartement* in Paris at a moderate rent, I will go back to my painting in real earnest, and we shall be happier than ever we have been yet. Come, you were indignant when I told you the truth—you thought you had married a rich man, and you hadn't; but this fraud I practised may, after all, turn out to have been meant as a blessing to us. Let us make an agreement here and now—we will stick together, come weal or woe. Lift your lips to me, and call yourself my wife! Come, Mamie."

Almost she seemed on the point of yielding. Whether the impulse was genuine, or only feigned in order to deceive me, I cannot even at this date say. It seemed to me then that she loved me, and that only her ambition stood between us. The tenderness, or appearance of tenderness, however, lasted only a second.

"Don't talk rubbish," she said sharply, drawing back. "Remember our compact and be sensible, or you will make me regret I ever yielded to your entreaties to remain with you when I found you out. As to Captain Forrester, you need have no misgivings about *him*. The man you will have occasion to be jealous of has not yet appeared on the scene."

She kissed me, nevertheless, and I left her feeling more secure, and more at ease, than I had done since the day of our *exposé*. Had I analysed our conversation, I should doubtless have realised as I realised afterwards, that she had uttered a deliberate falsehood to me; but I did not do anything of the kind. I was too relieved to hear that she was indifferent to the man, to examine and dissect her explanations. I had doubted her, and she had assuaged my doubt. I was ready and eager to have the doubt assuaged.

It was nine o'clock, and as I passed through the hall on my way into the street, I heard the band playing in the conservatory. I lit a cigar, and strolling along the "front" I asked myself if any-

body else since the world began had ever found himself in such a position a month after marriage as I was. Guilty as I had been, I felt my punishment had exceeded my crime. However true it might be that I was in no danger of seeing Mamie go from me immediately, my tenure of happiness could at best be brief. I held her by nothing—I without authority, she without scruples. Sooner or later she would certainly call upon me to bid her farewell. Better had my fraud been complete, I thought; if I had married her for her supposed fortune alone, and cared nothing for the girl herself, I might have welcomed the release I now so dreaded. It occurred to me that my appeal to her just before had not been strong enough. She had wavered; had it been more fervid, had I, as I could have done, flung myself at her feet and pleaded to her better self with all the force at my command, who knows but what I might have triumphed after all? The idea fermented in my brain and I stopped, and then abruptly retraced my steps.

When I returned to the hotel I found that she

had gone down from her room. I had not seen her in entering the hall, but it was possible she might be sitting in the drawing-room, or the conservatory.

The drawing-room was deserted save for an old lady or two nodding over novels in distant corners. The conservatory, then, would show her to me.

The band, I found on approaching, had ceased playing, and at the first glance from the doorway, I thought the retreat was empty. The lights in their red shades were turned low, and, in the obscurity, I did not immediately detect the figures of a man and a girl who started apart confusedly as my footsteps fell. They were Forrester and Mamie and, quickly as they had moved, it was not before I had perceived that his arm had been round her, and that her head was lying on his breast.

What she had told me had been false. I drew back, and mounted the stairs to await her with ten thousand devils raging at my heart.

CHAPTER IV.

SHE came into the room ten minutes later. For some seconds neither of us spoke. It was my wife who broke the silence, turning to me with angry eyes.

"What do you mean by spying on me, *mon ami?*" she exclaimed. "I don't allow that sort of thing!"

I did not stoop to excuse myself; I answered her as she deserved.

"So you lied to me an hour ago?" I said. "Captain Forrester and you are engaged?"

"Yes," she returned coolly, "we are engaged. He asked me to marry him just now, and I said 'yes.' What of it?"

"Simply that the marriage shall never take place. Nothing more. You will make whatever explanation to him you think fit. If you refuse, I will explain to him myself—on my word of honour!"

"You—you will not dare?" she gasped. "You—villain!"

"Villain or no villain," I replied quietly, though every pulse in my body was beating like a sledge hammer, "I will do it, I warn you! I have as little respect for you as you can have for me, but I have the misfortune to be infatuated with you, and I will not lose you for any consideration under heaven. You will break off your engagement with this man, or I will go to him—I myself—and tell him you are a married woman."

I had never spoken in this tone to her before, and I saw that she was startled and impressed by it. The colour went from her face, and she looked thoroughly frightened. Last resource of all, she began to cry.

"This is your promise," she faltered, "this is how you behave in return for my trusting you. You will tell him I am a married woman? Yes, married to a scoundrel who tricked me. So I am to suffer all my life for your infamous deception?"

"All your life," I answered composedly. "I am glad you begin to understand it."

"But I will not," she flared out. "You are not

dealing with a child, and I hold you to your bond. A compact is a compact. It was thoroughly understood between us, the condition on which I consented to remain with you, and now that the time has come, you want to ignore it. But you shan't. I will marry him whether you assist me or not, and if you dare to interfere——”

“Well,” I said mockingly, “if I dare to interfere? What can you do then?”

She sprang at me with a cry of rage, transformed. Her hands fastened on my throat, and, staggered by the unexpected onslaught, I tripped and fell.

There was no mockery left in me now. The weight of her body descended on me violently, as she let herself drop on her knees upon my chest, her fingers still gripped in my neck.

“I would like to kill you,” she hissed. “I would—I would like to choke the breath out of you where you lie!”

I seized her wrists, and forced her arms back. Then I rose to my feet, and lifting her bodily

up I carried her to the windows, which were open sufficiently wide to admit of my throwing her through.

"My beautiful demon," I said between my teeth, "you would like to kill me, would you? Well, if you don't solemnly swear to me that you will do as I bid, *I* will kill *you*! I have nothing to lose—without you I don't care whether I live or die, and, as a matter of fact, I would much rather murder you than see you another man's wife. Make up your mind, my darling, because my arms are getting tired. Which is it to be?"

We were on the fifth storey, and as I spoke I held her out into the cool night air, so that she had a complete view of the drop she might expect.

"Make up your mind," I repeated; "I will give you till I count 'Three.' One—I shall count quickly, so don't waste your time!"

Her face was twitching horribly, and she dared not struggle for fear of slipping from my hold. I could feel her trembling in every limb though, and as I pronounced the next number, she shook so

violently that she almost jerked herself from my arms.

"Two!"

"Arnold—oh, my God!" she gasped. "Arnold, listen."

"Three!"

"Yes," she said in a whisper, "I'll obey!"

I took her in, and set her down on the ground, where she collapsed in a dead faint. I loosened her dress, and forced some brandy down her throat, and dabbed her forehead with water and eau-de-cologne. When she opened her eyes she looked at me with docility and even affection. I had mastered her, and she had recognised her master. The next morning she wrote a letter to her *fiancé*, which she sent to his room by the chamber-maid. I did not see it, but, whatever it contained, it was thoroughly efficacious. When I descended to luncheon I heard that Captain Forrester had left the hotel. I was completely content.

In carefully reviewing my married life, I think that the ensuing three or four months were the

happiest time that it gave to me. The first week had been ecstatic, but it had been marred to a slight extent by the consciousness of suppression, which now existed no longer. Mamie and I at last thoroughly understood each other, I flattered myself. I could not have adopted a better course, I am certain, than holding her out of the window at the height of sixty feet, in danger of her life, and if I had had the courage to repeat the prescription at intervals, all might have been well with me to-day.

I now heard no more of her aspirations towards bigamy, and I was spared the sight of her flirtations. She had agreed to my terms, and we travelled together as husband and wife, the simulated relationship having been definitely dropped. Also we lived at a more reasonable rate, and I again began to devote some hours a day to the pursuit of my profession.

All this notwithstanding, our capital was dwindling to perfectly appalling dimensions, and in discussing our position I became painfully aware that my wife was a very impractical adviser. I may indeed say

that she was incapable of offering any advice at all. Her one idea of making money had been to marry it, and with this possibility removed she was absolutely helpless in regard to pecuniary affairs.

We had taken furnished rooms in London—in the Bloomsbury quarter—and it was there that I had rigged up an attic, which served me as a studio. Figure-painting had always been my forte, and with Mamie for a daily companion what more natural than that she should sit to me?

I painted her in profile, half-length, the full face laughing. I painted her in her bedroom wrapper; in a ball dress; dreaming in a garden under a parasol. She seemed to me daily to grow lovelier, and I had never felt my limitations so keenly as when I looked at a portrait I had finished of her, and realised how little it did her justice.

None the less I managed to dispose of some of the smaller canvasses among the dealers. They were my first sales, and the prices shocking, but it was an advance at any rate, and I told her she was bringing me luck. We were the best of good friends

now—the scene in Brighton never referred to—and she was always delightful, always in good humour, sometimes, I thought, more irresistible than of old. No girl ever lived who had the influence over a man that this girl had on me. Familiarity with her, so far from lessening her power upon me, seemed, on the contrary, to render me more sensitive to her fascination. I have run from my studio, obeying an impulse that would not be gainsaid, and burst in upon her in the sitting-room, and caught her to me without preface, and kissed her till she cried that I was mad. I have returned from the streets, my business unfinished, because I suddenly felt that it was impossible to wait another half-hour before having Mamie in my arms. Good women are not loved like this—I wonder why!

One afternoon I made my way homeward in high feather. I had sold two canvasses—two Mamies—“My Lady Asleep,” and “My Lady Smiles,” and Mosetenstine, my “patron,” had given me an order for a larger canvas—a work that was to mean a cheque for twenty pounds. We had only forty in

the house, despite the little additions I had been able to make to our hoard of late, and I promised myself to take Mamie out and buy her something pretty to wear, to celebrate the occurrence.

I was surprised to see a note addressed to me in her handwriting on the table, but I had such entire confidence in her at this period, that I opened it without a moment's misgiving. Probably, I thought, it meant that she had gone out alone, and wanted me to meet her somewhere. Had a bomb fallen from heaven, it would not have staggered me more completely than what I read.

"MY DEAR ARNOLD,—You must know as well as I do, that we cannot live together any longer. I am not the woman to spend my life in a garret, and it strikes me that very soon you won't have that. If you had been a different man I should have said this to you instead of writing it, so if my farewell is abrupt, you have only yourself to thank. I shall fulfil the intention I expressed to you in Trouville. I don't suppose we shall ever see each other again,

but remember that you are just as free as I am. You need never be afraid of my making an exposure, or levying blackmail. I am taking thirty pounds, and leaving you ten. Here is a kiss, *mon petit mari*; it is a pity you are a beggar, or we might have got on together very well. Good-bye. MAMIE."

I have that letter in my possession now, but I have quoted it from memory. Every word of it is graven on my brain—every word was like a sword-thrust in my heart.

Three days later I left for Paris. London, now Mamie had deserted me—London, where every stick and stone seemed to speak her name—was unendurable. Such enquiries as were possible to a man in my position, I made in the meantime, but I was able to gain no clue to her destination, and even had I done so, I felt I should be powerless to persuade her to return to me. Mamie was lost; whether so long as I lived I should ever see her again I did not know. It was not much more than six months since the day I had first met her, but I

felt suddenly an old man—shattered and purposeless. It was as though, in payment for the joy she had given to me, she had taken my energies and my mind. It was as though, in the passion I had lavished on her, I had wasted also my manhood and my soul.

CHAPTER V.

I ARRIVED in Paris with five pounds in my pocket, and took a room on the left bank of the Seine—the first that was shown to me. For a week I lived in a kind of stupor, seeing no one, and attempting nothing. The only pretence at creating a studio that I made was to surround myself with my scores of sketches of my wife, and at these I used, for the most part, to sit all day long and stare.

One morning the woman of the house knocked at my door, and inquired if I would have the kindness to settle my bill. I put my hand in my pocket mechanically, and found the sum she asked for there. When she retired I realised that only a few

francs remained to me in the world, and that, if I did not want to starve, I must work. Until then I had given absolutely no thought to my position, and the shock of finding myself so near to destitution did something to rouse me.

I must paint, then. What? Only one subject was possible to me—Mamie, again Mamie! A keen desire sprang into existence within me to find her features growing under my hand once more, and I dragged out my easel and my brushes and all the paraphernalia of my art with impatience.

For a week I lived on fifty sous a day, while from dawn to twilight without cessation I surrendered myself to a charm as insidious as opium-eating. I painted her as no man but I *could* have painted her—as even *I* had never painted her before. And while I worked the poignancy of her loss was forgotten, and I felt in a mad rapture, as if we were together, loving each other, again.

It was only the face and a shoulder, that study—the time at my disposal did not admit of a large canvas, but when it was finished I was amazed at

the vigour that it showed. I had never done anything half—nay, a tithe—as good in my life. It was not a portrait, it was a woman's head itself; a woman looking back and laughing—soulless, if you like, but living, real! It was Mamie as she was, the true girl stripped of her pretences, and displayed for your contempt or worship, according to your bent.

I could not tear myself away from it—not by reason of pride in my work, but because while I stood there, I seemed to be looking right into her eyes. It was Mamie! I almost expected to feel her breath. If I had had a louis, or the means of raising one, I would never have parted with it, but it had been done to sell, and it was absolutely necessary that a customer should be found. The varnish was no sooner dry than I packed it up, and made my way to a dealer whom I had been accustomed to importune in my bachelor days. He was in the country, I learnt, but would be back at the shop to-morrow. Well, till to-morrow I could wait. I lounged away, and walked, for the first time

since my return, up the familiar Avenue de l'Opera to the Boulevard des Capucines.

It was here I heard my name spoken, and, turning, I found myself being welcomed by Laroche.

"Guthrie!" he exclaimed. "My dear Guthrie! Well, well, well, and how wags the world with you, my friend? What is your news?"

He looked just the same as on the evening I saw him last, and it appeared to me such ages ago that, until I reasoned with myself, I felt vaguely surprised he had not altered.

"So you married, *mon brave?*" he continued. "Yes, I got the newspaper that you posted me. But never a letter—nothing but the mere announcement of your wedding. Come, let us sit down here, and you shall tell me all that has happened with you since we met!"

It devolved upon me to explain to Laroche that I could not afford to call for the drinks that he proposed, and he heard me with a look of surprise.

"*Enfin,*" he said, "we will go to a cheaper place, and *I* will pay. Let us turn up here!"

We ensconced ourselves at a little table further afield, and it was here I communicated to my fellow-conspirator the sequel to the plot we had hatched.

He listened with a chorus of ejaculations and blame. How could I have been so imprudent as to neglect the essential inquiries before I committed myself to marriage? It was ridiculous, crazy! To be taken in—the two of you—*tiens, tiens, tiens*, it was unheard of! And she has left you now, you say? *Eh bien*, it was the best thing under the circumstances that could occur!”

I dropped my head on my hands, and answered nothing. One fact only I had omitted from my recital—I had not told him I had adored this girl. I could not bring myself to do it; it was enough for my weakness to be known to herself and me.

“Well, what will you do?” he pursued. “How do you live now, Guthrie?” His eyes fell on the wrapped-up canvas, and he pointed to it. “May I see?”

I untied the string, and showed it to him.

“Do you know a purchaser?” I asked.

“*Mon Dieu!*” he exclaimed. “But it is fine, that! *Mon Dieu*, it has the touch of a master. How did you get it?”

“Get it?” I said. “I did it.”

“You?”

“Most certainly—I! Is it so good as all that, Laroche—you did not take it for my work?”

“Indeed I did not,” he declared. “No, indeed! My boy, it has even genius, that—well, something like it!” He peered and scrutinised continually. “You have found something you used not to have, Guthrie. And where did you *dénicher* your model? She is superb!”

“My model?” I hesitated. I did not wish to say it was my wife. “Oh, I will tell you another time—it is a long story,” I said. “Shall we stroll on? I want to hear about yourself.”

Laroche linked his arm in mine, and we proceeded together some distance in the direction of my home. Then he suggested accompanying me all the way, and when we reached the house it was natural that he should come in.

I made no objection, in fact I found his society an agreeable change to my thoughts, but I had forgotten one thing. My walls were covered with the sketches of Mamie, and he ejaculated loudly as he was bound to do. For the first minute or two he had failed to notice it. He lounged from one sketch to another, glancing at them, but all at once the similarity of the faces struck him, and he confronted me with a stare. My secret—if secret it could be called—was discovered.

“But here again is the same model,” he cried, “and here, and here! *Parbleu*, they are *all* the same woman! Is she, by chance, your wife—and you were in love with her?”

I groaned.

“Yes,” I said, “that was my wife, and I was in love with her.”

“*Mille—!—!*” He caught an oath in his throat. “But—but,” he stammered, “you were in love—is it possible? What a catastrophe! Who could have dreamed that things would turn out so? You were in love, and she has left you? Now I understand

your air, *mon ami*, that puzzled me." He gazed at the portraits again. "You had a good excuse for your devotion, one must admit," he went on. "But she looks like an angel, that girl, and she is a devil of vanity and greed! Are you sure you have not idealised her here? Had her face really the innocence you have shown?"

"She is just as I have painted her," I answered, "excepting that she is a thousand times more lovely. No man was ever born who worshipped a woman as *I* worshipped *her*, Laroche. I would go to hell as the price of passing an hour with her again!"

Now that the flood-gates were unlocked, it was a relief to me to pour out some of the emotions that had been killing me. I felt better when Laroche left. For the first time since the blow had fallen on me I had been able to speak of it to someone. Though he might not have understood in full, he at least had sympathised, and instinctively I found myself seeking him out in the next few days, ceasing to long for solitude, and preferring on the contrary the society of a friend.

I sold my newest "Mamie," and for five hundred francs. My immediate necessities were thus relieved, and the approval it received encouraged me to hope that I might still attain something of my earlier ambitions.

It is not my intention to dwell on my life for the next few months. By degrees the acuteness of my grief faded, and I went to my easel with the regularity, and with even an approach to the satisfaction, that I had been used to do before I quitted Paris on the expedition which had proved so disastrous to me.

Of Mamie I heard nothing whatever, and though my love for her had by no means grown any fainter, I no longer asked myself quite so constantly how she was faring. At the end of the year I was engaged—a little, I own, to my own amazement—on a picture for the Salon, and in the following March it was submitted, and accepted by the committee.

It made something of a stir when it was viewed at length. It was Mamie once more, and though the beauty of the woman undoubtedly went a long

way towards gaining my work the attention it secured, the treatment nevertheless occasioned a flattering degree of comment.

The press alluded to me as a "coming man," and whenever I visited the rooms there was always a little knot of people standing in front of my canvas.

I had long since given up the attic I had taken on my arrival, and it only remained of me to dispose of the portrait at the figure I demanded, for me to find myself on the high road to prosperity.

Judge of my delight when one afternoon I learnt that the picture was sold. I could scarcely believe my good fortune.

"Five thousand francs?" I exclaimed. "Where is the cheque—who bought it?"

The cheque would be handed to Monsieur at once. The purchaser was a lady who paid the stated price without a murmur. An English lady, or perhaps an American. In the secretary's books Monsieur could see the entry with her name and address.

I glanced at the page as directed. The pur-

chaser of my work was a "Miss Meredith." I cannot say why—there was nothing to explain the feeling; my reason told me it was preposterous—but I had an irresistible conviction that "Miss Meredith" was an alias; that it concealed the identity of Mamie—that, if I obeyed my instincts, Mamie would be found!

"Show me the cheque," I said.

I knew the writing.

By what means had Mamie become possessed of five thousand francs?

CHAPTER VI.

YES, she had forgotten to disguise her handwriting—I should have recognised it without the presentiment that thrilled me first. But that presentiment—based on nothing—how well it proved the marvellous influence over my existence that this girl had attained! I left the building treading on air; an exultation impossible to convey possessed me, and I had only one idea—to present myself at Miss

Meredith's address without an instant's delay. The cab into which I had flung myself crawled, it seemed to me.

The street to which I was bound was the Rue de la Neva, and when we stopped at length I leaped out, and demanded of the concierge whether Mademoiselle Meredith was at home.

She was not, I heard with inexpressible dismay.

I mounted to the door of her flat, and asked the servant when she would be back.

"It is of the utmost importance that I should see Mademoiselle at once," I explained.

The servant was *désolée*. Mademoiselle Meredith had gone to lunch with some friends; who could say when she would return?

I slipped a five-franc piece into her hand.

"At least you know whether she dines at home?" I persisted.

Yes, she knew that—she knew that Mademoiselle dined out, for she was going with a party to the theatre.

"Which theatre?"

She shook her head; but with a sympathetic smile, occasioned by the silver.

"In order to go to the theatre she must dress," I said persuasively. "Probably she will be back between six and seven?"

She herself did not consider that it followed. The toilet in which Mademoiselle had gone to the luncheon party was sufficiently elaborate to serve for the evening if, by chance, Mademoiselle should be pressed for time.

"At any rate I will call again later on," I declared. "And should I be so unfortunate as to miss her—if she returns, and leaves the house again, in the meanwhile—ascertain, if you can, what theatre it is. I will pay you for the service."

She promised to acquire this information for me, and for the present there was nothing further to be done. I re-entered the cab, and discharged it after a hundred yards. It cooped me. In my excitement I preferred to walk. I looked at my watch; it was four o'clock. What on earth was I to do with myself? I thought of going to see

Laroche, to whom I could recount the startling thing that had happened, but his place was some distance off, and then it suddenly occurred to me that if the domestic should mention a "Monsieur's" urgent inquiries to her mistress, Mamie might suspect who the visitor had been. I ought to have left a name, and a false one. That would at least have been better than giving none at all—a fact which seemed suspicious in itself.

I hailed another cab and drove back.

"By the way," I said, "I forgot to leave my card. I am sure your mistress will make an appointment with me if she knows who I am!" And I went through the farce of searching my note case, and finding that I had not a card with me. "What a nuisance!" I exclaimed. "However, say Monsieur Faure—you won't forget it—Monsieur Faure."

She assured me that when Mademoiselle returned the name should be given to her.

Good! It was now a quarter to five. I went into the first café I came to and endeavoured to steady my nerves with a liqueur of cognac, but I

was trembling with suspense, and cognac and tobacco alike were powerless to quiet me.

I was going to see Mamie again! My brain swam at the notion. I ought to have felt a passion of scorn and hatred—I ought to have meditated overwhelming her with reproaches—but the only thought of which I was conscious was that I should be holding her in my arms and kissing her in a very little while, that I should be falling at her feet and beseeching her to let our separation end.

Would it touch her—the forgiveness, when at the sight of my face she would expect a furious denunciation? I tried to think it would. I tried to think there was good in her, though I knew better. Merciful Heaven! how complete a fool I was!

Twenty minutes to six—an hour had worn itself away. It was now time for me to present myself at the flat once more.

The concierge, viewing me through the window, smiled and murmured something in her companion's ear, but whether the frequency of my appearance in the courtyard caused remark or not, I cared nothing.

I ascended to the first floor, and pressed the bell anew.

“Mademoiselle——?”

Ah, but Monsieur was just too late! Mademoiselle had returned not five minutes after his last call, and now had left the house again. Mademoiselle had been given Monsieur's name, about that Monsieur might make his mind perfectly content.

I choked down my disappointment, and murmured carelessly that it was very provoking.

“And the theatre?” I queried. “You did not forget to find that out?”

The theatre was the Vaudeville, and mademoiselle and her friends would be in a box.

“Thank you.”

I made her *pourboire* up to half a louis, and drove home to put on the orthodox costume for evening. I was faint with hunger, and yet I could not eat. The thought of dinner sickened me. Two more hours to drag along, and then I could only hope to gaze in silence, from afar. All chance of my speaking to Mamie to-day was lost unless——

Would it be possible, I asked myself, to follow her when the performance finished, and address her as she was re-entering the house? If she were alone, certainly—but would she be alone? How was she living? With whom?

All the questions that I had been unable to put to the domestic chased themselves across my mind, and tortured me. When at length it was time to proceed to the theatre, as the moment approached when I should actually look on Mamie's face again, my limbs would scarcely support me. I shook as if I had the ague, and, on dropping into my seat as the curtain went up, I lacked the courage to raise my eyes in order to see whether the same roof already covered us both.

What shall I say of my emotions when I looked up and saw her!

Our eyes met and she started visibly, but recovered herself in the next instant, and went on calmly surveying the house through her *lorgnette*.

Glancing in her direction a second time, I saw that one of her companions in the box was the

woman whom I had met as "Mrs. Fawcett" (Mamie had, then, again had recourse to the services of this creature, who now, doubtless, called herself "Mrs. Meredith"!) The other occupants were two gentlemen, one of whom, in the occasional glimpses I obtained of him, seemed to treat my wife with the greatest *empressement*.

The piece we were witnessing was a popular success. If you ask me what it was about, I can only say I have not the faintest idea.

The curtain had not touched the stage in descending at the end of the third act, when I sprang from my seat, and hurried into the *foyer*. I was in time.

Mamie and the other woman and the two men passed by me a few minutes later. They turned to the left in going out, and after half-a-dozen steps, paused. I feared this meant another delay—they were evidently going to take supper at Paillard's.

No, I was mistaken! Apparently Mamie excused herself. One of her cavaliers summoned a cab, and, shaking hands with her very tenderly,

wished her good-night. Her reputed mother took the seat by her side. The two gentlemen bowed, and the driver gathered up the reins.

"Follow that cab as closely as you can," I said the next second. "It is going to the Rue de la Neva; you must be alongside it when it stops!"

The presence of the woman mattered nothing to me; whether she were there or not, I would put my hand on Mamie as she entered her doorway, and she should listen to me. I swore it on my soul.

Along we rattled—in moments quite abreast; at others with Mamie's vehicle leading by a head. I wondered if she knew whom the other cab contained, and if she was prepared for what awaited her. There was a brilliant moon that night, the pavements were as white as if it were day, and once, as we sped along, I caught a glimpse of my wife's profile as she leant forward to draw the wrapper the closer about her neck.

We were turning down the street. The beating of my heart almost suffocated me. I thrust my head out of the window—her cab was now a yard or two

in front. It stopped. My own man pulled up his horse with a jerk, and I threw myself out at the instant that Mamie laid her hand upon the bell.

"Mamie," I said.

The door unclosed, and she hurried through it, and ran up the staircase, her companion following her, but with me close to her side.

"Mamie," I repeated, "Mamie, speak to me?"

She gave no answer: only by her quick breathing I knew that she was afraid.

"You shall speak to me," I vowed. "I have found you at last, and I don't let you go!"

We had reached her landing now, and she beat a hasty summons on the panels with her fists.

"Open—open!" she cried. And then as it opened: "Go in, Julia."

The woman brushed past us, and for a fraction of a second Mamie and I stood in the obscurity together looking at each other. I thought by her demeanour that she was becoming reassured as to my intentions, and I made no effort to hold her. The mistake was fatal, for even as I began to speak in

quiet tones, to tell her that she need not be alarmed, she made a sudden step, and slammed the door in my face. I stood on the landing ringing and knocking for a quarter-of-an-hour, but nobody gave me admission. She was there, but I could not reach her, and it was evident that if I rang all night she would not let me in.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning at seven o'clock I was in the Rue de la Neva once more—in a cab which I had engaged by the hour, in view of the fact that I might possibly have to spend the day in it. That she would endeavour to escape from me by flight I had little doubt, but I had now made it impossible for her to leave the house without my knowledge.

It was dreadfully monotonous, my vigil, and, when noon approached without anything having happened, I had to struggle against an almost unconquerable drowsiness which made me fear I might accord her the chance of giving me the slip after all.

I had not attempted to sleep the previous night, nor taken any other food at daybreak than a cup of coffee, and now my neglect of proper precautions began to tell upon me horribly. I got out of the cab, and walked briskly to and fro before the door. As I did so, the woman called "Julia" came through the courtyard, dressed for walking. She saw me, and, after pausing a moment, as if in hesitation, retraced her steps, and went in again—of course to warn Mamie of my espionage. Though this meant that my wife would not venture out herself now, I was greatly relieved by the circumstance, for I had begun to torment myself with the idea that, early as my return to the scene had been made, I might nevertheless have returned too late. At any rate she was there! I had only to be patient, and the opportunity I had missed so foolishly last evening must present itself again. This time it would *not* be wasted!

After twenty minutes or so Julia reappeared—glanced towards me out of the tail of her eye—and proceeded in the direction of the Arc de Triomphe.

It occurred to me suddenly that in default of

Mamie, I might do worse than question her accomplice. I wondered I had not thought of it before; and I was on the point of following her, when she turned. That turn had eagerness in it—I understood, and stopped short! It had been arranged between the two women that the “companion” should lure me away from the spot, while my wife was left free to decamp. I re-entered the cab, lit a cigar, and resumed my vigil doggedly. A little later Julia returned—her attempt a failure. I laughed.

My Jehu, who was a surly fellow, came round to the window, and inquired if I was proposing to engage him by the week. I said I thought it very likely, and demanded what he had to complain of if he were paid. He retired muttering. That was the only incident in the next two hours.

Exhaustion was almost overpowering me, and impatience fading into torpor, when I saw the maid-servant whom I had interrogated yesterday crossing the road and approaching me. My heart leapt, for it seemed certain she must be charged with a message, nor was I mistaken—she had brought one.

Mademoiselle Meredith would be glad if Monsieur would give himself the trouble of mounting to her apartment.

What did it mean?

"Thank you," I said in a voice that trembled, "I will come."

I followed her up the staircase, and passed through the door, which had been closed against me so summarily the night before. She showed me into a little "salon," and disappeared with the intimation that Mademoiselle would be with me *tout de suite*. Two minutes passed, by the clock upon the mantelshelf, which seemed to me to contain the suspense of an eternity. Then I heard the frou-frou of skirts, and Mamie came in, pale but composed.

"*Eh bien,*" she said, "you have found me!"

I went towards her. I took her in my arms—nor did she resist. I kissed her lips, her brow, her hands. I drew her down to the couch beside me, and abandoned myself in silence to the delirious ecstasy of feeling her breathing against my breast once more.

"My God," I said, "how could you be so cruel to me?"

"It was not my fault," she murmured, "not all my fault. You have forgiven me?"

"I forgive you everything—because I cannot help myself."

"Because you love me?"

"Yes, because I love you. How weak I am!"

"You are sorry?"

"If I say 'yes'?"

"I could not blame you," she sighed.

"And if I answer 'no'? Would you be glad?"

"'Glad'?"

"That I love you so much?"

"Kiss me," she whispered.

I folded her to me afresh.

"Mamie?"

"Well?"

"Tell me. That picture—why did you buy it?"

"I wanted it."

"Because *I*—because it was mine?"

"I will tell you the truth. I wanted it because

it was so like me, and so beautiful, but I was pleased that it was painted by *you*."

It did not satisfy me, but it was something! I was also eager to know how she was living, and how she was able to afford the purchase.

"Where did you find the money?" I asked after a pause.

She got up, and crossed to the fireplace, looking thoughtfully at the blaze.

"There is a great deal we have got to say to each other," she murmured. "You are looking very white—may I offer you anything?"

I shook my head. I could not bear for our *tête-à-tête* to be interrupted even by the momentary entrance of a domestic with wine.

"You are right—there is a good deal!" I said firmly, "and the sooner we make our explanations the better. My own is very brief, I am no longer quite a beggar, and I have a career in front of me. I love you—I ask you no questions—and I beg you to come back to me, my wife."

She smiled compassionately.

"Mine is longer, and more painful," she declared, speaking very slowly. "It would have been better—far, far better—if I had not been compelled to make it. But"—she opened her arms, and let them drop to her sides—"you have left me no choice! You follow me home—you create a scandal here at twelve o'clock at night, ringing and beating at the door—and, not content with that, you station yourself outside my house like a police spy, until in self-defence I am obliged to let you in."

She stopped, and tapped her fingers on the mantelshelf impatiently.

"You are not being so kind to me now," I said. "You have begun to speak in the style of your worst self. However, go on!"

"I will 'go on.' You have just used an expression which, considering all we have been to each other, is ridiculous and stupid. I have *no* 'worst self'! What you call my 'worst self,' is *my* self—you ought to know it by this time. Arnold," she continued earnestly, "I am a perfect beast—I am a mercenary, avaricious, soulless beast! If I had been

plain, you would realise it thoroughly, but my face confuses your judgment, even though you know in your heart how empty a charm it is. I was 'kind' to you just now, you said? If it *was* a kindness, which I very much doubt, it was mere impulse. I meant nothing—neither repentance nor remorse—it was simply that I was, for a second, touched by your tenderness. It does not imply that I regret my action in leaving you—I should do exactly the same thing to-morrow—and what I want you to understand is that I am an absolutely worthless girl whom you are (and always will be) a great deal better off without."

"One thing you overlook, though," I said wretchedly, "I happen to love you."

"Heavens above!" she cried. "You are a man, aren't you?—you can conquer an infatuation, which your own sense tells you is a mad one. You can forget a devotion which I have trampled under my feet. I don't *want* your love—I don't value your love—your love is an infernal nuisance to me. Put it aside. Go and marry a woman who wishes to be

loved—go and live with a woman who'll pretend she wants to be loved. Go and do what you like, only don't force yourself on *me*! You are in my way—you weary me! Be off!”

“You tell me to leave you—now, at once?”

“Not ‘at once,’ that was a figure of speech; I was getting excited—there is more to be said. You asked me where I got the money to buy your portrait of me. I sent Julia to the Mont de Piété with some bracelets and rings. Where did I get the bracelets and rings? They were presents to me from Sir Edwin Gore. Why does Sir Edwin Gore make me presents of jewellery? Because I am engaged to be married to him on the second of next month. Now!”

She had commenced to pace the room with quick, uneven steps, an old habit of hers when she was disturbed.

“Once before,” she resumed, “I was engaged to be married, and then you interfered, and prevented me. You will not threaten my life this time, Arnold, and I should not be so easily scared if you did.

But you have come upon me at a juncture when I wanted to see you least, and you have made me think, think, think, till my head aches."

"I am sorry," I said with mock humility.

"Yes, it is true." She put her hand up to her forehead with the self-pity of a suffering child. "Last night I could not sleep," she added, "I heard every hour strike."

"I also was awake," I said, "I did not go to bed."

"No, I suppose not. However, that is different! Well, my friend, listen. I have got something to propose. I have already shown you that I am a horrible wife, and that your freedom is a million times better worth having than ever *I* could be. Take your freedom, leave me mine, and I will guarantee you an income of a thousand francs a month."

"What?" I cried.

"Don't doubt me—I swear to you I can do it! And remember too, that if I failed you, I should be as much in your power after marriage as I am be-

fore. He is tremendously well off, and he will be richer still. I assure you the money shall be paid to you regularly all your life. And," she added pensively, "if he died and I were left a widow—well, perhaps then I might be disposed to attend to you if you said you loved me. What do you say?"

"I say you have mistaken your man," I answered; "I am not such a cur as you evidently think me."

"Is it not enough?" she exclaimed eagerly. "Believe me—oh, do believe me, Arnold!—that if I found it was possible to get more, I would increase the payments. I would never be mean, I would do my very utmost in return for your compliance."

"It isn't a question of its being enough or not enough," I said; "it is simply that I am not so infamous as to sell you to him. Can't you understand that—have you no conscience whatever?"

She threw herself into a chair and began to whine.

"Oh then, what am I to do?" she moaned; "I thought if I made that sacrifice it would settle all nicely. I have tried so hard to satisfy you, and you are cruel to me—cruel! What am I to do?"

"You must break off the engagement," I replied, "just as you broke off the one with Captain Forrester."

"No, no," she gasped, "I never will."

"Oh," I pursued. "*I* must go to Sir Edwin Gore, and tell him you have deceived him. There are only the two courses—select the one you prefer."

She sobbed despairingly; the tears were running down her cheeks.

"I am in your hands," she said, "and you make my life a misery to me! Oh, how brutal it is of you, how barbarous. I must think, I must think!"

"You must think quickly, though," I said, "for the situation has got to be ended at once. Ah, Mamie, why do you make me brutal to you, why do you give me the cause to talk to you angrily? Darling, darling, is it so fearful, the life I offer you in exchange? A life with the husband who adores you—a husband who, with your love to inspire him, would be famous one day! I have an apartment in the Rue d'Artagnan; come and see it. You will

find many more portraits of yourself there! I can promise you that if it pleases you, and you should agree to remain with me, you will not find yourself debarred from any of the comforts of civilised existence! Very speedily too, we might remove to another address—in a more fashionable quarter. We will live in the meantime a delightful life; you shall have no worries, no cares, no reproaches for the past. In the morning while I work, you shall lie watching me in a rocking chair, on your lap a supply of the newest journals, and bonbons and cigarettes. In the afternoon we will have friends and music. In the evening we will dine under the trees in the Champs Elysées, and conclude the day at a theatre or a *café chantant*. You say you don't want my love; but you are a woman, and it will not be disagreeable to you to be worshipped by a man who knows all your faults, and demands no deceptions on your part to sustain his homage. Beloved"—I lifted her hands to my burning lips—"come to me, Mamie—come."

"What explanation could I make?" she faltered.

"The wedding day is fixed. Ah, you are talking of impossibilities!"

"You will think of an explanation! You have changed your mind—what more is necessary? Mamie, I beseech you, don't force me to go to him—to expose you. And I must—I must, if you refuse! You can write—you need never see him again. It is the simplest thing in the world."

Her hesitation thrilled me with hope. Words burst from me, and she listened in moments as if on the point of assenting.

"But—oh, there is Julia," she exclaimed. "What would she think of me—at the last minute too?"

"Julia! You can't consider a wretch like that."

"She was very useful to me," she said doubtfully, "when—at the time I joined her again. I don't know what I should have done without her. Arnold, do, do be satisfied without me. Do."

"Mamie, it is one thing or the other. You write to that man and return to me of your own accord, or I go to him and force you to return."

"*Mon Dieu*, but you are mad about me," she murmured in French.

She leant her head on her hands meditating. I watched her in an agony that was indescribable. At intervals she looked across at me, and met my eyes, and once she nodded as if to say she knew what was in my soul and even pitied me.

All at once she stretched out her hand with a smile.

"Well, you have triumphed," she said, "you have won—if a victory over a girl like me can be called a victory! I consent!"

"You will return?"

"When you like—or stay! I cannot join you in the rooms you are occupying now—you have talked nonsense. You are supposed to be a bachelor: what would the people think? I will join you to-morrow, and we will move into another apartment together as husband and wife." She drew me to her and kissed me. "Are you content?"

"Not quite."

"What more do you want?"

"I cannot bear you out of my sight till to-morrow. At least spend the evening at my place. We can discuss our plans then."

"I shall have a great many preparations to make," she demurred, "still, as you wish it, I will come for a little while. Only I must be late, I can't help that, and you mustn't be cross with me for keeping your supper waiting."

I could scarcely realise that her compliance was real; I was dizzy with joy, and embraced her again and again.

"Come, whatever the hour is," I said. "Pull the bell and the gate will open. I am on the *entresol*, and I shall be waiting for you, my wife. God bless you!"

I bade her swear by whatever memories she held most sacred that she was not deceiving me. She did so, solemnly calling Heaven to witness it, and then I tore myself away.

CHAPTER VIII.

I PASSED the evening straining my ears for the sound of wheels on the asphalte, but no sound came, and at ten o'clock I began to fear after all that I had allowed myself to be duped. It was past eleven before a light tapping fell upon my door, and then Mamie entered at last, closely veiled.

"I did not hear your cab stop?" I exclaimed, springing up. "Dearest, how glad I am, how happy you have made me!"

"I walked," she said, and then hesitated in embarrassment.

I scarcely noticed it at the time. I was too crazy with rapture at seeing her, but afterwards I understood that she had walked because she wished to make it impossible for it to be discovered that she had ever been here.

"Nobody will disturb us?" she asked anxiously.

"And if someone did? But you need not think of it—no one will come in, I know."

She loosened her cloak, and I took it from her and laid it aside, her hat, her veil, I relieved her of all. How sweet it was to see her in my room like this!

The supper was laid on the table; the wine was put out, and the chairs in their places, but she declared that as yet she was not hungry, and as for me, to eat was the last thing I desired.

"You have written, sweetheart?" I inquired. "It is done?"

"Yes," she said, "it is written and sent. I belong to you now once more. I hope you will not repent of your bargain."

I drew her down to my side, my arms enfolding her and smothered her with caresses. I threw myself on the ground, and kissed her feet in their tiny shoes, her skirt, her gloves and the hands with which she was still playing with them.

"Repent," cried I, "look at me and see whether I have the air of repenting."

She laughed.

"No," she said, "you seem to be unconverted

still—it is a fact. Tell me, you have never forgotten me since I went away?”

“Never.”

“Truth?”

“Truth and honour. Never forgotten you, never ceased to love you!”

“Marvellous boy,” she murmured.

“Is it so wonderful? If I remember rightly you used to know your own worth too!”

“But there are other girls—and pretty also—and girls who would have appreciated devotion better?”

“Lots of them, Mamie.”

“And you never saw one——?”

“One who what?”

“One who made you think you might console yourself?”

“I swear to you No!”

“Nor one so beautiful?”

“Nor one so beautiful.”

“Nor so nice?”

“Nor so nice.”

"In fact, you have dreamed of me, and painted me, and longed for me ever since we parted?"

"In a word you have said it. Do I deserve a kiss?"

She clasped me close with a sudden ardour, which startled me, the colour mounting to her cheeks.

"What a fool you are!" she exclaimed, "and what a fiend you have married! Ah! Arnold loathe me, turn me out of doors, now, this minute! Never see me again, it will be better for you."

Would that I had taken her at her word! She had the basest nature I have ever known; she had not a redeeming characteristic—she was not truthful, or honest, or generous, or anything that a woman should be. But—and this "but" in justice to her I will set down—she *had* for a single instant revolted against the purpose which had brought her to me, and had I obeyed her almost involuntary warning, the end of my history might have been written otherwise.

I did not obey it. I adored her, and she was

lying on my heart, I could feel the throbbing of her own! Her moment of sincerity passed, and now her eyes were lifted to mine with all the provocation of a courtesan. The perfume of her hair mounted to my brain and intoxicated me, the pressure of her lips made my senses swim.

"So you love me?" she whispered.

Everything danced before me; I saw a myriad stars! We spoke to each other no longer; silence was enough, and with every kiss I spent on her some of my life seemed going out from me. Presently she said:

"And now tell me where you propose we shall live?"

I answered that all quarters were alike to me providing we were together. I said that, for that matter, there was really no reason why we should not live here, where we were.

"I told the people nothing about myself," I explained. "I could quite easily inform them now, that my wife is returning to France, and will join

me. They have neither heard that I am married or single—it is a simple affair enough.”

“Would it not seem strange?”

“Why should it? And if it did?”

“One must study *les convenances*,” she remarked with a smile. “Still——”

“The rooms are pretty ones,” I pointed out: “Let me show you the studio—it is jolly!”

“Is it lighted up?” she asked.

“No,” I said, “it is dark, but I can soon put a match to the gas. Will you come?”

“Let us have supper first. You shall show it to me afterwards, and then I must say ‘*Au plaisir, mon mari.*’”

She had never been more entirely ravishing. I led her to the table, and waited on her as if she were my guest or my bride. I opened the champagne, and filled our glasses.

“To our future!” I cried gaily.

“To our future!” she echoed, sipping the wine.

I had never found a supper so delicious. We

ate, we laughed, we chatted all at once, and both together.

"Now let me see where my artist works!" she exclaimed.

"I am ready," I declared.

"No, go first, and let it be lighted up when I see it. I want an instantaneous view. To go into the room when it is dark would not be so nice. Call me as soon as it is ready."

I ran up the stairs, and prepared it for her. Then, instead of calling, I went back to fetch her. She had not heard me return, and the careless words I had been about to utter remained unspoken at the sight that met my eyes.

Mamie was standing beside the chair I had vacated; in her hand she held a phial, and the contents of this she was emptying into my glass. I understood at last. She had pretended to consent in order to come to my house, and murder me.

The exclamation of horror that I was unable to repress reached her ears, and she started and saw me. Her face turned livid with fear, and when she

attempted to speak her tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth. For some seconds we stood staring at each other dumbly. The one to break the ghastly pause was I.

"I was a little too soon," I said hoarsely. "Eh? You have my sympathy."

"What—what do you mean?" she stammered.

"I mean that you have lied to me. You have not written to that man, nor did you intend to write. You came here to poison me, and had I been an instant later, you would have succeeded."

"You are insane," she panted.

"Do you deny it? What was in that phial? Come, if I am misjudging you, drink the wine that is in my glass!"

"Arnold!"

"Drink it," I repeated. "The proof is very easy, drink it!"

She put out a palsied hand as if to obey me, but her arm sank to her side, and she gasped incoherently. She was a sorry spectacle.

"Let me help you," I said—a devil seemed to

have taken possession of me—"my unjust suspicions have unhinged you! I will put the glass into your hand. See!"

I did so, and for a fraction of a second we stood looking at each other in silence once more.

In her eyes there was an appeal frightful to see, but it failed to move me in the least. I had resolved that this girl was to die, for I realised at length, without the possibility of self-deception, that no power on earth would induce her to remain my wife in anything but the name. Fervently as I forgave her, she did not value my forgiveness; though I gave her a home again and again, again and again she would abandon it.

"Make haste," I said.

Momentarily it appeared as if she would swallow the draught. She raised it to her mouth, and then, as if by accident, the glass fell to the ground, and the contents were spilled over the carpet.

"That is a pity," I observed, "for now you must have a more violent death! There is nothing for it,

my angel—I am going to send you to Heaven with the greatest possible despatch.”

She knew I meant it then, and flung herself upon her knees, and wept and raved like a mad-woman.

“Don’t make a noise,” I said, “it will avail you nothing! Better to say a prayer if you know one.”

“Spare me,” she screamed, “spare me.”

“That you might desert me, or attempt my life again? No, my little one, *pas si bête!* Loosen your bodice; I have not a pistol, and I must use a knife.”

I took one from the table, and felt the point—it was all that was to be desired. I put my arm round her waist, and carried her to the couch. She no longer struggled now, for her senses were partially deserting her.

“Don’t hurt me more than you need,” she moaned, as I lifted my arm.

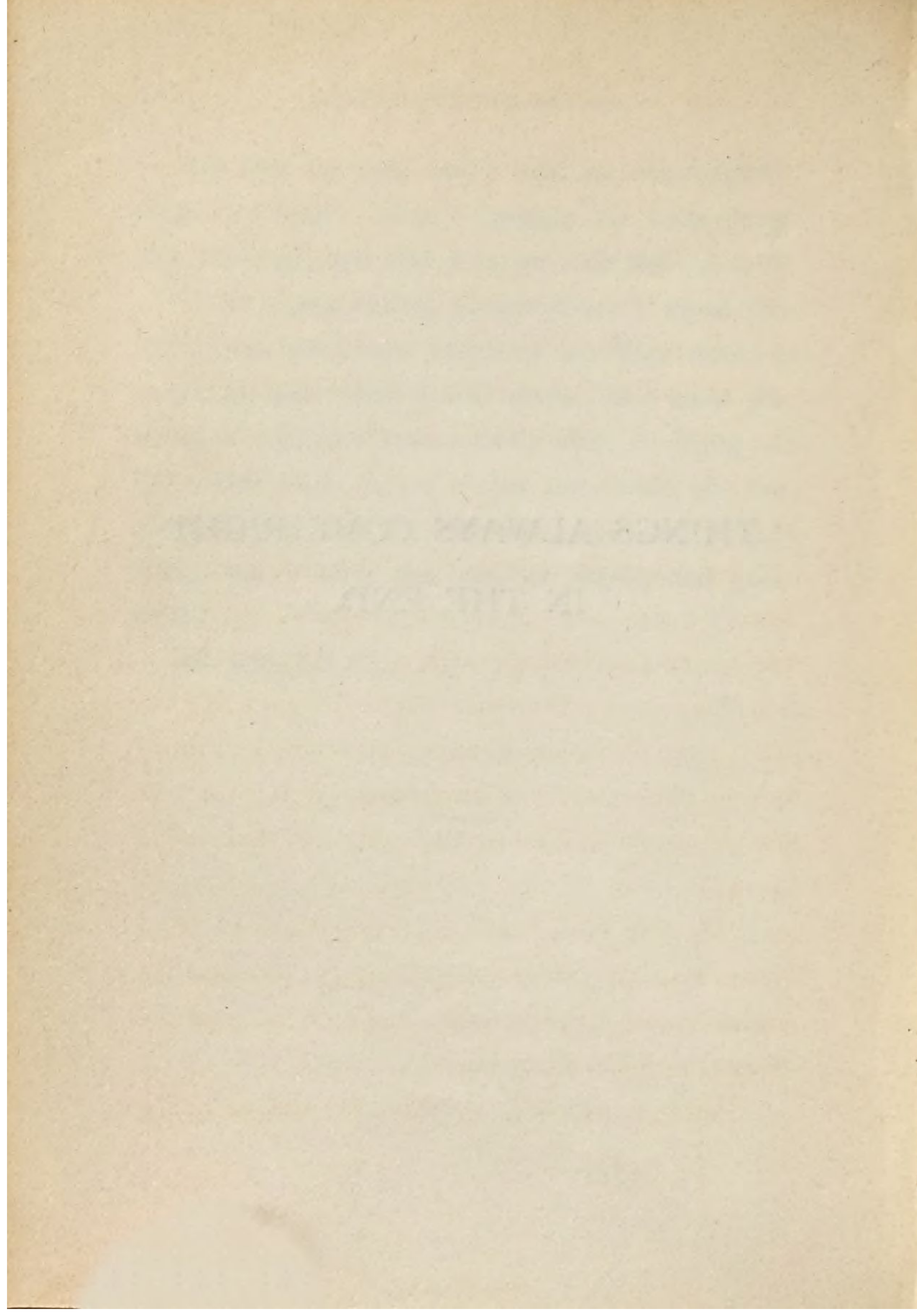
“I shall only strike once,” I answered; “make your mind easy.”

She shut her eyes, and I bent my own carefully upon her heart. Then I brought the knife down with a plunge, and held it in her while she quivered.

When I was certain all was over, I wiped the blood from her bosom and drew her linen across it to conceal the wound I had made, for I knew she would not wish to look unlovely even in death. I had never been fonder of her than when she lay there, innocent for the first time, and after I had kissed her, I went out into the streets, and gave myself up.

My story is told.

THINGS ALWAYS COME RIGHT
IN THE END.



THINGS ALWAYS COME RIGHT IN THE END.

THE scene was a dining-room in Kensington. The hour was nine o'clock, and two gentlemen sat at the table—the host, and his nephew Mr. Charles Carew. The ladies had withdrawn—one of them very anxiously, for she knew what was to follow her retirement—and now the younger man—her partner in guilt—cleared his throat and prepared himself to speak.

“My dear uncle,” he said, “there is something I have to say to you. I can only beg you to hear me patiently, and I believe that—that it is the most important moment of my life.”

Having said this, he gulped at his wine nervously,

and prayed for powers of persuasion that he was far from feeling.

Mr. Liddington glanced at him with surprise; frowned a little and bade him go on.

"What is the matter, Charles?" he asked.

"Sir, I had not the slightest right to do it—I am perfectly aware that my position did not justify me—but I have fallen in love with my cousin Minnie, and Minnie, God bless her, isn't indifferent to *me*. Will you er—will you in point of fact consent to our engagement?"

"You—you—my dear Charles? My dear, *dear* boy!"

"Yes, I know," stammered Carew hopelessly, "that it is very preposterous. Of course you have much higher views for her, and—and all that! But I shall get on, Uncle Marmaduke, I shall indeed, and if you would only consent to her waiting a year or two for me—just to give me the chance—I should be happier, more grateful to your goodness, than it is possible for me to express. Minnie, too, prays that you will agree to a provisional engagement. She

has seen nobody she likes better, and she is only twenty when all is said, remember! If she did—if anybody came along in the meantime to make her want to change her mind—why, why she would only have to tell me so, of course, and she would be as free as air. No harm would be done, none; no harm at all. Don't refuse; please don't! I shall make away with myself if you do."

"Does your Aunt," inquired Mr. Liddington, "know about this nonsense?"

"Minnie is telling her now," murmured Charlie Carew desperately. "We thought that if you talked it over together—you and Aunt Marion—you would be able to decide better, perhaps, than if you answered me at once. I will wait till to-morrow if you like for your reply—or till next week. I would rather you didn't make up your mind at once, I would indeed!"

The elder man leant back in his chair pondering, while the other pulled restlessly at his moustache. A long pause ensued—a pause that to one of the pair seemed as if it would be interminable. The

servant came in, under the impression that the room was vacant now, but his master signed him away; and when the door was shut again:

“I can see no benefit likely to accrue to your hopes from consideration,” he said at last, “but, since you wish it, I will think the matter over. You know I like you, Charles—almost as well as if you were my son—but it doesn’t appear to me that Minnie and you are suited to each other, and I should say the same even if you were making a thousand a year. Of course that you are making nothing at all is a very grave objection, but it isn’t my only objection, I assure you. Come, let us go up stairs!”

She was a very pretty girl, this Minnie Liddington, who eyed them so wistfully when they entered, and when her father made no reference to the matter, her cheeks turned white, for she knew it argued ill for the marriage on which she had set her heart.

“Well,” she said under her breath to her cousin five minutes later, under cover of examining some music at the piano;

"He is going to think about it, dearest! And Aunt Marion?"

"She must consult papa."

"Was she angry?"

"N—no. And *he*?"

"N—no; but he wasn't encouraging exactly."

"I understand," she murmured. "Poor Charlie, what a time you've been having! Now I have got to sing—isn't it hateful? Charlie, I will write to you to-morrow, and tell you everything that occurs."

He did not stay very late that evening. As a matter of fact he made some excuse for departing soon after the conclusion of the girl's song, and as he lit a cigar on the steps, and turned homeward through the summer night, he asked himself, as lovers have asked themselves ever since the world began, why he was so despitefully used. He was seven-and-twenty—at the Bar, without a brief. A passion for lawsuits on his late father's part had reduced his patrimony to scanty proportions, which meant enough to keep him floating respectably along, and no more. It was fitting perhaps, that the son of a man who

had squandered a fortune on litigation should have adopted the profession he had, but he was disagreeably conscious all the same that his progenitor had spent a good deal more on Law than *he* would ever succeed in making out of it.

“I want to get my money back,” he had explained laughingly when he was ‘called’. “The Law owes me a lot, you see,—I’m Stanley Carew’s son!” But he had dropped that joke to-day, and mentally decided that the Law was a bad debtor. When he first found himself falling in love with his cousin Minnie, his ambitions and hopes had revived a trifle; now in view of his conversation with her father to-night, he was more despondent than ever. No, he was making nothing!—it was true and supposing—even supposing—that his petition were granted, and a provisional engagement agreed to, how could he guarantee to be any better off next year than he was this? A heart-breaking career his! A man could do nothing but wait. Other fellows, with other occupations might assist their destiny by exertion, but a young barrister could not. He could

only sit down with folded hands, and listen for a solicitor to knock at his door. To listen, and wait, when the brain is on fire, and every nerve is strained with impatience—what a fate!

He rose the next morning every whit as melancholy as he had gone to bed. He was certain that Marmaduke Liddington would refuse! That phrase about being almost as fond of him as if he had been his own son was pure nonsense, just politeness that meant nothing, and he had heard enough from Minnie to realise that he could not count on very ardent co-operation from his aunt either. Well, he would marry his darling whether her parents were agreeable or not, but—but it would be an awful thing to be forbidden the house, and have to trust to clandestine interviews and secret correspondence! He groaned, and his breakfast remained untasted on the tray, and the matutinal pipe was flavourless to him.

He could scarcely credit his good luck when during the afternoon a wire reached him asking him to call at Stanhope Terrace as soon as he could

spare the time, and he leapt into a hansom feeling that the fickle goddess must have been napping, and sent him one of her favours by accident.

Mr. Liddington was in the library he heard, and it was into the library he was shown.

"Well, my dear fellow," said his uncle when greetings had been exchanged, "I have not lost much time in letting you know my decision have I? I am prompter than you asked."

"You have been goodness itself," said Charlie, on tenter-hooks; "And your decision is—?"

"Your Aunt and I have talked the matter over very carefully indeed, but really the result of our conference rests with yourself."

"With *me*?"

"Yes, Charles, with you! Minnie is determined to wait for you; and you, it appears, are determined to wait for Minnie. Well, we are satisfied."

"Oh, my dear uncle!" exclaimed Charlie breathlessly. "I will show you how justified you are in your confidence; I will prove to you by a thousand—."

"Wait a moment," interposed the other, "let me

finish. We are satisfied if *you* are satisfied. When you have won a position that will enable you to give Minnie—I don't say 'the luxury she is accustomed to,'—a comfortable home, she is yours; but neither her mother nor I are willing to give her to you to-day. In a word we will give her to you when you are a man able to support her, but we won't consent to her marrying a man whom we should have to support."

"I am perfectly and entirely contented," gasped Charlie, "I asked for nothing else. Believe me, sir, I thank you, and Aunt Marion and Heaven with all my heart and soul."

"Good!" said the elder man. "Minnie understands the conditions, and now you can go and talk to her if you like."

"Oh, one thing!" said Carew, turning; "How long am I given to make a competency? How long will you allow my probation to last?"

His uncle put out his hand;

"Indefinitely, my lad! I am not a fool, and I know that these things cannot be done in a day—

nor yet in a year. I put no limit on the time my girl may wait for you. All that I insist on is that you both *shall* wait."

Carew could no longer find words to express his gratitude. He was simply speechless, and could have been scarcely more astonished if the Persian carpet had yawned at his feet, and Aladdin's "slave of the ring" appeared to gratify his most cherished hopes in person.

He hardly knew how he got out of the room. Minnie was in the yellow drawing-room,—radiant and bewitching. A greater contrast than existed between her demeanour of last night and to-day could not have been. The clouds had passed, and sunshine burst out upon them both in the most amazing, even the most unprecedented fashion. It was as though one had gone to sleep one December evening when the snow was on the ground, and woke up in the morning to find the roses blooming at the window.

"My angel!" he cried. "How did you compass it all—how have these miracles come to pass! Oh

Minnie, you shall see how I will work for you now—by Heaven I feel as if I should get a red bag to-morrow, and take silk the week after! And if you won't get tired, dearest—I mean—" with a laugh—"if it should be a fortnight?"

"Not if it should be three weeks even," she returned, smiling, "not if it should be three years—or five—or ten! Oh, Charlie—let me say it once—you don't know how dearly I love you! I love you with all my soul!"

On the scene between these two young people, exuberant with joy, and effervescent with constancy, there is no need to dwell. Suffice it to set forth that Charlie held her in his arms, and imitated Romeo in his fervour, if he was not equally poetical in his phraseology. Suffice it to set forth that the ring he brought her on the morrow was an unpardonable extravagance, and that for fully a week he trod on air.

He now visited the house even more frequently than had been his wont, and more often than not he took with him tickets for a concert, or a basket of flowers,

or a box of sweets, that had cost at least a sovereign. The delight of giving to her was the keenest pleasure he had tasted, and he indulged it as fully as his means would allow. Some might have thought more fully, if wholly cognisant of the circumstances. It was, indeed, curious that Mr. Liddington himself offered no remonstrance. But he did not, and was as complacent and jovial as could be desired. Yes, at this period Charlie Carew trod on air.

It was already July, and Town was beginning to thin. The Liddingtons were going to Trouville, and it was the most natural thing in the world that Charlie should pass the greater part of the long vocation there too. In Trouville he enjoyed himself intensely. Here he was practically with Minnie all day long, and both continued to paint fancy pictures of the rapid strides he was about to make in his profession. Certainly it was expensive, this holiday, more expensive than his holidays had hitherto been, but the ecstasy that the extra outlay purchased could not be thought dear at the price. Don't think that Minnie Liddington was to blame for permitting her lover to spend

so much more than he could afford. Minnie was a very sweet girl, and that would be unfair to her! She had never been taught to consider the matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. Charlie knew that when he proposed to marry her!

Well, he had "a rattling good time," as he himself expressed it, and it was not until the ensuing term had commenced, and he was back in chambers once more, that it began to occur to him that he was not yet any nearer to a Lord Chancellorship than he had been before the engagement was sanctioned. No, he was in just the same position!

The reflection saddened him, and for the next few weeks he was a regular attendant in Court, and, at night, sat up poring over depressing looking volumes with black coffee on the table, and a wet towel round his head. As a matter of fact both these adjuncts to his studies were superfluous, but they made him feel additionally industrious.

He shared his chambers with a friend, or to be exact the friend shared the chambers with *him*. The friend, whose name was Jessop, had a practice,

and one morning when they both chanced to be in the room together, Charlie confided in him.

"By the way, Jessop," he remarked, "I don't know if I mentioned it to you? I'm engaged."

"Condolences," said Jessop, "I mean congratulations. Hence these tears, eh? that is to say this 'zeal'! I thought something was in the wind. When do you marry?"

"Oh," said Charlie, "not till I'm flourishing. That is the alloy! You don't know anything one could do, I suppose, to shorten the road a bit?"

"Well,"—Jessop mused; "you might marry a solicitor's daughter. I don't know of anything else, and under the circumstances I conclude that is impracticable?"

"I am afraid it is. It is rather tedious, old man, the waiting. How long do you think it may be before I'm making, say, five or six hundred a year?"

It was one of those foolish inquiries that are eloquent of the questioner's frame of mind. Nobody whose patience is not at the last gasp wastes his breath upon a question which he knows per-

fectly well cannot be answered. Jessop shrugged his shoulders.

"I can only say, keep up your courage, and hope!" he replied. "I think you have stuff in you. You may be doing remarkably well in a few years' time."

"A few years' time." Charlie groaned in his soul. Of what avail this midnight oil, this daily boredom, perspiring in a crowded Court, if only in a few years' time! As well let things come of their own accord, he thought, and take his life more easily.

Minnie asked him if he was 'getting on at all' the next time they met, and he replied by expressing something of his latest view.

"It is one of those professions that cannot be forced, darling. A man may wear his life out hoping, or he may hope calmly and comfortably. The result is the same in both cases."

"But you said, Charlie—?"

"Yes, dear, I know. I said I was going to set the Thames on fire in the next six months. Well, the six months are almost up, and I haven't done it,

and to tell you the truth it looks quite possible to me that I may not be any further advanced six months hence either! It's a horrible thing to feel, and it depresses me more than I can say; but I do feel it, sweetheart! Sometimes I could beat my head against the wall in rage at my own impotency."

Of course she comforted him and told him that he was foolish, and clever in a breath; foolish to have such thoughts, and clever enough to make a practice that should be the envy of all his colleagues. Of course, too, he allowed himself to be consoled, and left her effervescent with resolution once more.

And so time went on until it was a year from the fateful afternoon when the magnanimous Mr. Liddington had sent that telegram, and yielded his consent, and still—and still—Mr. Charles Carew was waiting for his first brief.

One night he sat alone in his chambers, thinking. He was thinking many thoughts. To begin with it was the story of hopeless despair over again. He was doing no good—he would *never* do any good! He did not believe he would ever earn a

penny at the Bar as long as he lived! Then he began to ask himself what he should do if this presentiment were fulfilled. His private means amounted to what? Nothing! he pronounced desperately. Heavens above, he had run into debt—he shuddered to remember how much—this last year! No, if he did not succeed in his profession he could never marry Minnie or anybody else. And yet—and yet—once he had been comfortable enough, though just as briefless! It was his engagement that had made his private income so dreadfully inadequate during the past twelve months. It was his engagement which made him so ill at ease, and caused the sight of his Aunt's and uncle's faces to be so unbearable a nuisance. Formerly he had met them with cheerful serenity. What had it been to them whether he were getting briefs or not? That was his own affair, nothing to do with any other living soul—*formerly!* He groaned. If he were not engaged he would owe nothing—neither money nor accounts of his progress. It was a responsibility, an engagement, there was no gainsaying it, a heavy

responsibility. But he had incurred it, and—. Heigh ho! sighed Mr. Carew.

This was the initial stage, of what had been inevitable, and the developments, which were inevitable also, came in due course. The first of these, in which he indulged often, was a daydream—a fanciful interview. He permitted himself to imagine Mr. Liddington inviting him into his study, and declaring obdurately, that the engagement must end. He heard his own remonstrances, and the other's insistence, and finally Minnie came in, and averred, without any tears painful to witness, that she felt it her duty to obey her father's commands. He saw himself leaving the house, free, new-born, relieved of this abominable weight which was crushing the youth out of him, and then the picture faded, and he would return to reality with a smothered anathema on the impetuous folly which had got him into his awful situation. Oh, the developments came duly, every one of them!

At last he began to really consider if it was possible to confess something of what he was feeling

to his fiancée, and terminate the position in actual fact. No, he could not! He would be a cad, a terrible cad to do such a thing when the girl was willing to wait for him. Merciful powers, how long would she wait? It was now fifteen months since he spent that thirty five pounds on the ring—would she wait for ever! Why in the name of common-sense did not her parents say something? It was preternatural their complaisance—preposterous!

But Mr. Liddington was as amiable as ever, every time he dined there, and Aunt Marion could not have seemed more satisfied if the wedding day had been fixed. Charlie Carew used to go home from these dinners, and knock the furniture about, he was so exasperated.

Mr. Jessop asked him how his matrimonial prospect was looking once and, bursting to unbosom himself to somebody, the young man took advice.

“Do you know,” he said, after shirking the fence three times, “I’m almost afraid it was a mistake, my engagement, old chap. I wouldn’t say it to anybody

else, but to you I don't mind acknowledging that it is giving me grey hairs."

"Ah!" said Jessop, sententiously, and stroked his chin, which was a habit he had in consultation.

Charlie would have liked him to say more, but as he did not, he spoke again himself:

"The worst trouble is that a man can't go to a girl and say he is sorry she wants to wait for him. He would be such a—such a bounder, wouldn't he?"

"Well, I don't know," said Jessop. "There are ways of putting things you must remember. You couldn't say you are 'sorry she is willing to wait for you,' but you might explain that your prospects don't warrant you in asking her to continue making such a sacrifice. That is the way *I* should put it. I should 'Release' her."

"'Release' her?" Carew's tone was quite excited. "By George, I never thought of that. Yes, of course, that's the way—I 'release' her! Why, hang it, she is wasting her best years for me, isn't she? It is the least I *can* do, and—and it's rather a beau rôle."

Jessop smiled.

"I think it's the 'way out' since you ask me," he said. "I should go and see the lady to-day if I were you. Make a plunge, and get it over."

"But"—Charlie's face was suddenly as long as his engagement—supposing she is magnanimous and—and refuses to be 'released?'"

"Ah," said his friend, "in that case, my boy, I'm afraid you will have to go through with the affair. An engagement is like a debt—it is much easier to make than to get out of. However, see what she says; and my advice is: the sooner the better!"

"I will," declared the fiancé firmly, "I'll go this very afternoon!"

* * * * *

And all this time what of Miss Minnie Liddington? When her parents had suddenly displayed that astonishing change of front it had not been quite so inconsistent as it may have appeared. Both knew something of human nature—of their daughter's and their nephew's nature especially, and they had arrived at the conclusion that to oppose the young peoples'

wishes would be the very means to compass the end they least desired. In other words they had decided that were they to refuse to countenance an engagement, Minnie and Charles would regard themselves as victims of worldly severity, and more likely than not remain true to each other to the end of the chapter.

“Let us,” Mr. Liddington had said, “consent! On second thoughts it is far the more judicious course. A secret engagement—which is what will happen if we are obdurate—will keep their romance alive; a formal engagement, which does not come to anything, will soon become an unendurable fetter to both of them.”

His wife had entirely coincided in his views, and the plan, as the reader knows, had been put into execution. With Charles it had succeeded perfectly, and how it had worked in connection with the young lady may be gathered by a dialogue which occurred coincidently with the conference between the barristers.

Miss Minnie was at home in the morning-room

upstairs, and a visitor, whose name was Captain Archibald, or "Archie," Franklin, was sitting on a very uncomfortable chair in front of her. Captain Franklin had his hat in his hand, and was fingering it nervously, while it was apparent that his hostess was not entirely at her ease either.

"Mamma will be so sorry she was out," she said. "May I give you some tea?"

"Er—no thank you, Miss Liddington. I—er—in point of fact I was hoping I might find you alone."

"I don't understand, Captain Franklin."

"I have come to say good-bye," he stammered. He was a good-looking young fellow of about thirty, and if ever a man adored a girl in this world, it was plain that *he* adored the one he was trying to talk to. "I have come to say 'good-bye.' I am going out to India, and—I shan't see you any more, Miss Liddington."

"Your regiment is ordered out to India?" The colour had sunk from her face, and she spoke in a kind of gasp.

"No, the regiment isn't going. I—I intend to exchange, that's all."

"Oh?" she said. "You are tired of England?"

"No—not tired. I—I think it better I should go." There was a pause while they both watched the canary that flapped its wings against its cage. She turned, and her eyes met his own.

"Miss Liddington, Minnie," he exclaimed, "don't you know *why* I'm going? I'm going because—I haven't the least right to say it, and I didn't intend to—I'm going because I love you; because you are promised to somebody else; because I dare not stay and meet you!"

"Captain Franklin."

"Yes, it is true. Don't be angry with me—I couldn't help it. Sometimes I have thought you saw my trouble, and pitied me."

"Perhaps I did," she faltered.

"Minnie!"

"Ah no, you mustn't call me that! You know I am engaged to marry my cousin."

"And—and you love him?"

"I—."

"Tell me," he begged.

"It was because I wanted it that papa consented."

"But it was a long time ago. People change their minds, do they not?"

"I cannot change mine," she answered. "It is impossible."

"Why?"

"It would be dishonourable."

"Minnie, my darling! And if it were not dishonourable—if, say, you were free—need I have gone to India then? He slipped his arm round her waist, and, strange to say, she did not repulse him.

"If you were free," he repeated, "need I have gone to India then?"

"Oh, let me go," she cried springing to her feet, "Captain Franklin, I am pledged; I am not able to listen or to answer. Don't tempt me."

"Minnie, you angel, you love me—and *I* love *you* better than anything or anybody in the world!

Dearest, listen to me. Will you wreck our lives—your life and mine—for a mistaken sense of duty. Think what it means. To marry a man who is indifferent to you, or whom you like as a friend merely, and to live for years and years repenting, regretting, and knowing that for the want of an hour's courage you have doomed yourself to unhappiness for all time! And me—think what you do to *me!* You send me from you wretched and despairing. I should be a good husband to you—you would make the world a Heaven to me! Well, you deny me joy, you deny me everything, and I who could have been so happy—you who could have been so happy too—are to be divided, strangers to each other, in order that you may do a wrong to another, who would be the first to blame you for your want of honesty if he suspected it.”

“To ‘Blame’ me?”

“To blame you strongly if he really cares about you! Is it not a wrong to become a fellow's wife, and swear to do things which you know are impossible to you? You will be deceiving him—

allowing him to believe what is false. And afterwards he will find out that you did not love him, and when he reproaches you, what will you say?"

She was crying and she smoothed the tears away with her disengaged hand. The other Captain Franklin had seized.

"What will you say? That you did it for the best? He will laugh in your face. He will remind you, and justly, that you were old enough to be able to know the difference between right and wrong. He will say that painful as it might have been to him to learn the truth before you were his wife, it would have been a thousand million times preferable to learning it only when it is too late. Your excuse—what will be your excuse? You will be defenceless!"

"Oh," she moaned, "was ever a girl placed in so dreadful a position."

"Lots of girls," said her lover decidedly. "Some of them have had the pluck to end it; some of them have been guilty of the mistake to which you incline yourself. These girls are hopeless women

to-day. There will be one more if you don't listen to me."

"I am listening," said Miss Liddington, humbly.

"First of all then, tell me frankly that you love me."

"Captain Franklin!"

"Archie please! Say, 'Archie I love you!' Sweet-heart, is it so terrible a confession?"

"Archie, I love you," acknowledged Miss Minnie in something between a whisper and sob.

He took her in his arms, and kissed her—kissed her till her blushes dried her tear-stained cheeks, and she was docile and resistless.

"Now," he said, "promise me to see your cousin and make a clean breast of the alteration in your feelings towards him without delay. When you have done that I will speak to your father. But I do not fear the result, darling,—I can give you everything you are accustomed to, and nobody can say a word against me! You will have a talk with the gentleman, and ask him to release you. I am sorry for him, but you can do no less. Is it understood?"

"It is understood," said Miss Liddington. "I will speak to him the next time he comes. But—if he refuses?"

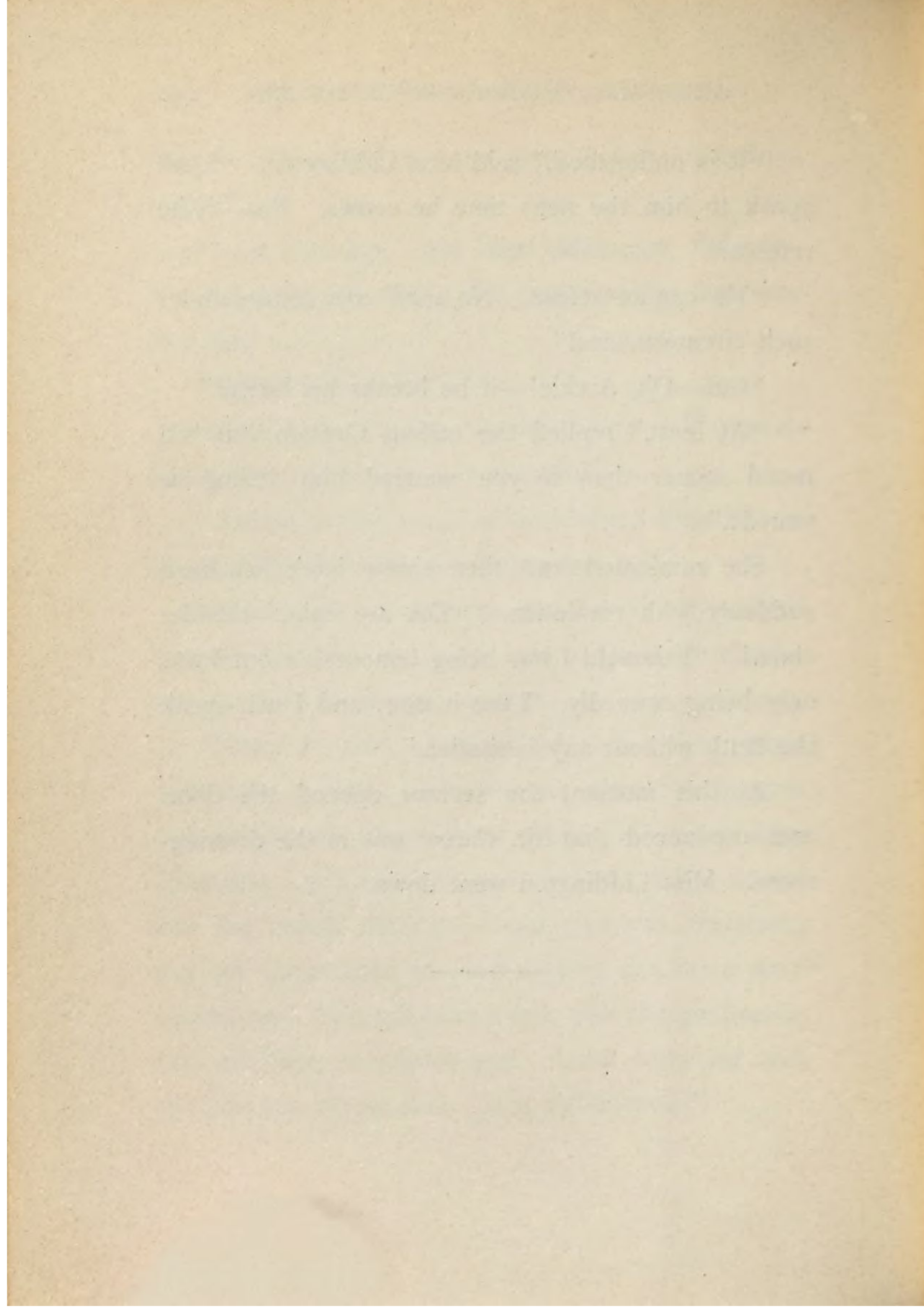
"He cannot refuse. No man can refuse under such circumstances!"

"But—Oh, Archie!—if he breaks his heart?"

"At least," replied the callous Captain, "it will mend sooner than if you married him feeling as you do."

She ruminated and then threw back her head suddenly with resolution. "You are right," she declared. "I thought I was being honourable but I was only being cowardly. I see it now, and I will speak the truth without any hesitation."

At this moment the servant opened the door, and announced that Mr. Carew was in the drawing-room. Miss Liddington went down.



MISS WEATHERLEY'S LESSON.

MISS WEATHERLEY'S LESSON.

THERE was a "poetical justice" about the affair, which, apart from the happiness that it brought me, makes the matter worthy of narration. Things do not often turn out so well in real life, and I was sensible of an intense satisfaction at the time, which I freely confess I doubt my ability to convey to-day in print. However let me try.

I am the nephew of the late Lady Honoria Greaves, and, both my parents having died while I was a child, it was to my aunt I was indebted for my education and for all the tenderness that I knew.

After leaving Oxford—I did not distinguish myself there particularly—I chose the Bar as a vocation. But it was perfectly understood that I was my aunt's heir, and there was a tacit understanding

between us that it did not matter very much whether my legal income was the envy of the four Inns of Court, or an unknown quantity.

To go into details it proved an unknown quantity.

Lady Honoria was perfectly complacent. She was fond of me, indulgent to me, and generous to a fault. My allowance was ample for a bachelor of moderate tastes, and on the occasions when I exceeded it by a trifle, the relieving cheque was never accompanied by any disagreeable lecture. Could any young man ask his life to be cast on pleasanter lines?

I shall incur the reader's blame, when I say that I fell in love, and acknowledged the fact to her.

It was indiscreet, it was rash, it was the sort of thing that the wiser person would have avoided; but I did it, and my aunt was furious.

If you ask me why, I do not know. There was really no *reason* why she should be angry; she had no more desirable damsel in her eye for me, and I will do her memory the justice to declare that she was absolutely unmercenary. Nevertheless she did

object; my engagement was imparted to her when she was sixty years of age, and she rapped her ebony cane upon the floor, and observed that I was an ungrateful idiot.

By some instinctive consciousness I had been aware she would be displeased, and when she vowed that I either gave Sybil Weatherley up, or she struck me out of her Will, I said to myself all that I have said just now—that my communication had been rash, indiscreet, and the sort of action that a prudent person would have known better than to commit.

Why should I not have fallen in love? I did not know. *Why* should I not have told her? I did not know either, only it did not surprise me when she fell into a rage. My silent warning had been disobeyed.

However, whether I had been justified or unjustified, and whether my aunt was right or wrong, what she said she evidently meant, and it devolved upon me to go to Miss Weatherley and her mother, and inform them that in my capacity of fiancé, I was now a beggar.

That I loved Sybil Weatherley very passionately

indeed will be obvious from the fact that the alternative my aunt had proposed never struck me as feasible for a moment. Beggar or no beggar, Sybil and I were going to be married. I had a profession, I was young, and I could work. At the worst, instead of the wedding taking place immediately, we should have to wait a few years. (The Possibilities of "A few years," when one is twenty-seven, are enormous.) My love was genuinely reciprocated, and I had not the faintest doubt that my darling would throw herself into my arms, and swear eternal constancy and patience to the end of the Chapter.

She lived at Dorking.

When I reached the house, I heard that Mrs. Weatherley was out, but Sybil was in the drawing-room, practising—she had a pretty soprano voice—and into the drawing-room I accordingly went.

I was plainly discomposed, and it was not more than a minute or so after our greeting that she inquired the cause.

"You look very worried, Frank; is anything the matter?"

"Yes, sweetheart," I said, "something *is* the matter. Sybil, I have awfully bad news to give you. Are you strong enough to hear it?"

"Lady Honoria!" she gasped, paling. "I know—you have seen her and she will not consent."

I nodded gloomily;

"Your guess is perfectly correct, Baby. She *won't* consent. She does not want me to marry, and if I do so she swears she will alter her Will. It's bad enough, my tidings, isn't it?"

"Oh, Frank!"

"Look here, dearest, you'll wait for me, won't you? You won't throw a fellow over because—because he won't be as well off as was expected? You know how I love you, Sybil; you are just all the world to me! I don't care a hang about the loss of my expectations—not for myself, I mean—but I should simply break my heart if I lost *you*. Listen: In a little while we shall be able to marry all the same. I shan't be able to give you all I hoped to do—we shan't start in a little house up West, and you will have to drive in hansoms instead of a

brougham—but as I get on at the Bar, dear, we can be tremendously happy in spite of everything. Just wait a while, my own, and you will see! What if we do go to the theatre in the dress-circle instead of the stalls; what if we do have to live in the suburbs? Sybil”—there was a break in my voice that I could not repress—“you will be true to me, I am sure? Only say it—say you will!”

“Of course,” she murmured, “I will wait, Frank! Did you fear I should love you any the less because you were poor?”

Her hand slipped into my own; I drew her close to me. *Almost* in that moment she was all that I had wanted her to be—I could not have defined the difference.

I did not wait to see her mother—she thought it better that the change in my prospects should be first made known by herself—and after an hour I tore myself away.

I returned to the house on the morrow. Again I should have been puzzled to explain what I found lacking in the manner of my fiancée. I could have

found nothing tangible to complain of in the mamma. But—the “but” cannot be denied—when I journeyed home to my chambers in the evening, I was sensible of a new depression—a heaviness weighed upon my heart—I had a fear, even a horror, that I loathed to acknowledge to myself.

And yet, if you had asked me, I should have been ready to swear that Sybil was an Angel—the least mercenary, as she was the most beautiful girl I had known!

The disillusion though, was not long in coming.

It was not more than a month later that I received a letter from Miss Weatherley which showed me, beyond the possibility of self-deception, that I had been a credulous and besotted fool. I tore it into a thousand fragments, and stamped them into the fire, but as well as I remember her note ran thus:

“My dear Frank,

“How I hope you will read this letter in the spirit in which it is written, and believe that I shall

always feel for you the truest friendship! Frank, I want you to release me from our engagement, for I know now, painful as it is to say, that it has been a mistake. Fond of you I shall always be, but *not*, —not dear, in the way you would have! I have met a man, who has shown me the error I have made, and—oh, do, do forgive me—I love him! Send me a line, however hasty, to say you bear no ill-feeling towards me. I feel too guilty just at present to write more.

“Yours always sincerely—

“SYBIL WEATHERLEY.”

“P. S. I am sure you will not be so unjust as to suppose that the alteration in your position has anything to do with this. It has not indeed!”

Oh, I went to see her when my first fury had subsided, and I pleaded to her vehemently, but her decision was impregnable.

“Who is the man?” I asked.

“You must spare me that question,” she said; “That is not fair.”

“And the change in my position has nothing to

do with it?" I exclaimed mockingly. "How strange a coincidence, Sybil."

She burst into tears.

"You are cruel," she sobbed, "cruel! I knew you would say bitter things to me if we met—why did you come! I made a mistake, and I have discovered my mistake; what have you to complain of—that I did not become your wife, and discover it afterwards!"

There was an accent of sincerity in her words that made me for the first moment ask myself whether it could be possible I was really misjudging her, and when I left, I parted from her almost tenderly.

"Since you love this other man, dear," I said, "marry him. God forbid that *I* should stand in the way of your happiness! If I have been cruel to you, I am sorry. Good-bye."

Yes, I left her with the feeling that I had treated her harshly at the beginning of the interview, and it was not until I learned that a constant visitor at the Dorking house now was the Hon. "Bob" Fitz-

Herbert that I was assured that my earlier reproaches had been justified.

Had my rival been a poor man like myself, I could have believed, but the title made the belief *too* difficult! I was thrown over for a wealthy suitor, and I loved the girl. I was half mad!

I did not go near Lady Honoria; I did not care whether she became reconciled to me or not. I went into the country and lived a life of despair, the only recreation I permitted myself being long gallops over the neighbouring downs. Such mutual acquaintances as Fitz-Herbert and I possessed I wrote to from time to time in order to ascertain whether his engagement to my ex-fiancée was a "fait accompli" yet or not, and I heard after a while that it was not. He was, I heard, rather gone on "some girl living down at Dorking," but my correspondent did not suppose that "anything would come of it." I ground my teeth, and hoped she might be disappointed in her ambitions. "'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,' my lady," I muttered. "Perhaps you have thrown dirty water away, and

won't get clean after all! How rightly served you will be!" I went for a more furious gallop than usual that morning, and came back to my diggings in better spirits.

Well, a week afterwards I heard that Fitz-Herbert had gone off on a six-months yachting tour, and I knew that Sybil Weatherley had been "fooled."

The day after that I fell with my mare, and was carried to the County Hospital with a broken leg and complications.

I give you my word that when I "came to" after the operation, and found myself lying in a little private ward, with every prospect of being a prisoner for the next two months, my paramount feeling was one of gratification to remember that Miss Weatherley had failed. It may sound very mean, and perhaps it actually was so, but the gratification was there, and I will not deny it in writing this true historiette. I positively chuckled, and my nurse vowed I was the best patient she had ever had. She little suspected the shameful cause of the smiles that found their way to my lips so frequently.

Of course by degrees I thought of other things, and then I began to bore myself horribly—to bore myself, that is to say, when nurse Edith was out of the room, for when she was present there was something very peaceful and pleasant in my situation. I liked to watch that grave, serious face of hers as she moved to and fro; to hear her voice as we chatted; and to feel the touch of her gentle hands as she moved the pillow for me. I liked nurse Edith herself.

As I grew better she told me about her life. Her father had been the rector of a village in which I had often spent the summer as a boy, and it was endeared to me by so many associations, that we immediately found a topic of mutual interest. I would say:

“Nurse!”

“Yes?”

“Now let’s talk about home!”

“Oh, home?” she would echo, “Westbrook wasn’t your home!”

“But it was *yours*—and I like to think about it.

See, it is sunset. Isn't the High Street looking pretty now! And the pond with the ducks, at the end of Aspen Lane—isn't the pond looking jolly with the sunset on it!"

She would smile wistfully.

"Nurse."

"Yes?"

"Should you like to see Westbrook again?"

"One day perhaps."

"Why not now?"

"Well then, perhaps now; this evening; at once, to be truthful—but I can't."

"Don't be sad. Let's talk of something else."

I did not realise why, but by and bye I was sorry to understand that I should be fit to leave. When I did realise the reason, I knew that it meant my wounded heart and my shattered limb had both grown well together, and that I wanted to have Nurse Edith for my wife.

It was after I had asked her, and she had owned she loved me, that two things happened; I received a letter apprising me that Lady Honoria was dead,

and that, her Will having been unaltered, I was a very rich man. And I received a visit from Mrs. Weatherley and Sybil, who, having doubtless heard the news, had come ostensibly to condole with me on my accident. Their visit was interesting. Sybil had never been more lovely, or more sympathetic; Mrs. Weatherley never more odious and artificial. She was full of curiosity to inspect the hospital—she had never been inside one before—how clean it was, how wonderful! “*Could* she, *might* she, be permitted to walk through the public ward and see the lovely poor patients?

I said it was possible; and she departed with the guileless enthusiasm of seventeen summers, leaving her daughter and me alone.

There was a little pause which Sybil broke:

“I can’t say how grieved we were,” she said, “when we heard what had occurred to you. A fall with your horse—?” she shuddered— “You might have been killed! Oh Frank—may I call you ‘Frank’ still?—if you had died, you would have died hating me!”

"Not at all," I said, "not at all."

"You would. And I should have deserved it. Well, it is too late now to say—."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I say it is too late now for regret. You are free, and all is over between us, is it not?"

"Quite," I agreed; "as you wished!"

She sighed delicately, and pressed an inch and a half of lace and cambric to her eyes.

"Yes," she murmured, "it is too late for anything but friendship. It is as a friend I have come here with Mamma to-day, to see how you are progressing."

"Oh, I am nearly well," I said cheerfully. "I have been here six weeks."

"We only heard of it the other day; and since then the suspense—Thank heaven you are out of danger!"

"I fell out of the frying-pan into the fire, though," I observed. "Do you know what has happened since I came? Why, I have actually lost my heart."

She turned as pale as death, and at this moment Edith came in followed by Mrs. Weatherley.

"It is a fact," I continued gaily, "and you are both in good time to congratulate me. Edith, I want to make these visitors known to you. Mrs. Weatherley, Sybil, let me introduce you to the lady who is going to be my wife—just as soon as is convenient after Lady Honoria's death!"

They were so completely staggered that I had the opportunity of speaking again.

"Even had there been no affection between my poor aunt and me," I said, "I could do no less than wait six months, seeing she has been good enough to leave me her heir."

Conversation was a little difficult after that, and it did not need the sight of Sybil's face, when she said "good-bye", for me to understand that her lesson had gone home.

JEAN, JEANNETON AND THE
PERSONAGE.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR LENOX TILDEN FOUNDATION

JEAN, JEANNETON AND THE PERSONAGE.

THE Crown Prince of Westphalia arrived in Paris at a critical juncture in the lives of two individuals, of whom he had never heard. He came to indulge in what is called "dissipation" in people of inferior rank, and a "love of informality" in princes. He meant to have a rattling good time, as he generally did when he came to Paris, and he, so to speak, felt the last shackle of the Court of Westphalia fall from him as his carriage whirled him out of the Gare de Nord.

The two persons of whom he had never heard, however, were at this moment a prey to the wildest despair. Their names were Jean and Jeanneton. Jean was an artist, and Jeanneton was a model—

not of all the virtues, but of the minor studios on the left bank. It may be added that they loved each other.

Now Jean had, by reason of a succession of imprudences, contrived to entangle himself in a situation of pecuniary embarrassment, which he felt was only terminable by death, and, being an artist and a Frenchman, it was the most natural thing in the world that he should look for a woman to die with him. Who so eminently fitted for the part as Jeanneton, whom he adored?

He put it to her.

"I must die, little one," he said gloomily, "there is no other course open for me, *miserable* that I am! But I cannot leave thee, Jeanneton—I cannot!"

She was not so taken aback by this style of address as an English girl would have been. Though it is not so ordinary as an invitation to dinner, a request to commit suicide with another fool is not remarkable for any rarity in France. None the less she looked at him with startled eyes.

"My poor Jean," she faltered, "my poor boy!

Consider—do not be hasty—all may be well with thee yet.”

“It cannot,” he declared, “if I do not have two thousand francs by to-morrow, I am ruined and disgraced! And where—” he opened his arms dramatically,—“where shall I get two thousand francs from, I? It is as impossible as a million! No, Jeanneton, I must die; our marriage can never be now; and my art, my beloved art, is ended for me.”

He commenced to pace the room with excited strides, and Jeanneton sat down and cried.

“Is it farewell between us,” he cried, suddenly stopping, “or have you the courage to join me in my journey into the Great Unknown? Come, speak, answer!”

“Life is sweet, Jean,” she whimpered; “we are very young!”

“Bah, you are afraid—you do not love me! Think, you were to have been my wife; will you not put your arms about my neck, and be my bride in death? Listen, to-morrow I will bring the charcoal here—here into this room where we have so often

kissed each other; we will make the door and windows fast and firm; and then holding each other's hands"—in imagination he already saw the paragraphs in the papers, and he felt it was due to himself to be picturesque—"and then holding each other's hands we will glide forth together into a world where there are no more tragedies, sweetheart; where there is nothing but peace and rest."

But Jeanneton cried still, and did not seem attracted.

"We will think about it," she said. "You know how I love thee, Jean,—oh dearly, dearly! But after all it is only money, thy trouble, and to die for money, surely it would be foolish of thee!"

"Two thousand francs," he gasped.

"Yes, two thousand francs; it is a great deal—Still—"

"Still what?"

"Are there no means, no friends, by which it might be found."

He laughed sardonically; "Indeed there are not!" he said. "Two thousand francs, it is a fortune!"

She could not repress a groan. In truth it was a fortune, this sum! In her life she had never had more than a couple of louis in her pocket to knock against each other. Yes, it was an awful situation he was in—but to die, to die! She did not want to do that; no, not even if he did reproach her for her cowardice, and call her faithless.

“Twist me a cigarette,” she said, “I must consider.”

He rolled her one—of the villanous French tobacco they both found delicious—and eyed her heavily while she smoked.

“Thou hast decided?” he asked at last.

She nodded.

“I have decided, Jean!”

“You will be brave, petite, and true?”

“I have decided that we must neither of us die; we must be brave—and live!”

“Bah,” he cried, “enough! Go, leave me—I know you now! *This* was your love—your paltry, pitiful love that I thought a grand passion! So, it terrifies you? Well, I shall die alone to-morrow, un-

less a miracle occurs, and when I am no more—. I say when I am no more—”

Emotion choked his utterance, and as for Jeanne-ton, her sobs were so deep that she was shaken by them.

“I love thee, Jean, I do!” She moaned, stretching out her hands. “Believe me, darling, that if I could save thee—”

“If you could save me?”

“I would die gladly to do it! But to die for nothing—oh, that is hard and cruel; that is too much! Listen, let me speak.”

But he would not listen. He waved her from him, and she went down the five flights of stairs into the street red-eyed and broken-hearted. Jean would be lost if he did not find two thousand francs, and he would perish cursing her memory. Was ever a Model of the Quartier Latin placed in a more distressing situation!

Now if she had *not* been a model—if she had been a heroine of a three volume novel for instance—this history would have ended differently, for she

would have gone home, and wept within doors in an orthodox and becoming manner. As it was, after she had cried for two hours, she dabbed her face vigorously with her pocket handkerchief and powder-puff—she did not disdain to use powder, little Jeanneton—and determined that the best thing to do under the circumstances was to try to forget her grief and her lover's injustice by spending the evening at the Jardin d'Été.

(The crown Prince of Westphalia was at this moment dining with a small and select party of gentlemen at Voisin's.)

No sooner said than done. She put on her hat—the astonishing hat trimmed with the violets and carnations—and her most spotless and fascinating frock. It was seven o'clock. The summer twilight was fading into dusk, and the rattle of the traffic on the Paris streets floated up to her as if with invitation to put aside dull care and be merry. Jean had insulted her; Jean had declared that she cared nothing for him! *Alors*, he had lied, the miscreant, and she would not suffer his taunts to embitter

existence for her—her whose life had hitherto been as thoughtless and as radiant as a butterfly's. She would betake herself to the Jardin, and she would dance and laugh with the jolliest of them. Her eyes filled again, and once more she dabbed at them vehemently.

(It is calculated that at this juncture the Crown Prince was finishing his second bottle of champagne, extra sec.)

When she reached the Jardin, no one would have suspected the pain that had been eating at her heart awhile ago, and as the hours wore on she even managed to banish the remembrance of it herself. There were Henri and Armand, and Jules there, all contesting for the privilege of her smiles, and all desirous of valseing with her. And there was Natalie—the cat—as envious as could be of her wonderful hat, but pretending of course to be most amiable. *Everybody* was there. If it had not been for Jean—Jean who was so miserable, and had been cruel to her—she would have enjoyed herself amazingly. A petit verre? Well, a petit verre then! And after-

wards one with Jules so that he should not be jealous, nor Henri especially favoured!

It was a rollicking scene enough that night, and so the Crown Prince thought—as clearly as he could think anything—when he found himself in it later on. The wine there was good too, and he sampled it freely. Nobody was likely to know him, and he put restraint aside and drank and danced and frolicked with the wildest present. By and bye he danced with Jeanneton, who recognised him by the photographs she had seen, but who had nous enough to call him “Monsieur” simply, in response to his “chérie.”

It was approaching midnight when the august personage realised dimly that he was supposed to be passing the evening with a party, and that somehow he had got detached from them. He did not mind at all—he was in no condition to mind anything—but he wondered momentarily what had become of them, and whether he should be offended or not. Then it occurred to him that perhaps the fault had been his own, and while he was consider-

ing how it could have happened, his eyes fell on a very pretty girl, who immediately banished all other matters of interest from his mind. Unfortunately the girl was the wife of a respectable citizen, and when the august personage lurched in her direction with an extraxagant compliment, he received a push from the lady's husband, which sent him flat on his back on the gravel.

There was a row royal in an instant. The citizen was perfectly sober, and the Crown prince was as drunk as any simile you please. He spoke French, moreover with an atrocious accent, and there was every prospect of the intoxicated foreigner finding himself borne off by the gendarmes to the nearest police station, when he was saved from this fate in an altogether surprising fashion. A girl of the people stepped forward out of the crowd, and upbraiding him for his intemperance, and apologising to everybody else in the most voluble argot, caught him by the arm, and had him bundled into a cab. Almost before the gendarmes were sure whether they ought to have allowed him to go or not, the girl had

jumped in after him, and the helpless Prince, and Jeanneton, the model, were jolting away together to the wrong side of the Seine.

It is a fact. She had had an inspiration and obeyed it. Jeanneton had lived to kidnap the Crown Prince of Westphalia!

The fracas had sobered him to some extent, and there seemed to be the danger of his senses returning. This, however, was easily obviated. At the first café they came to Jeanneton bade the driver stop, and five minutes afterwards the Prince's head sank upon his shirt front in a peaceful sleep. Jeanneton made a cigarette, and chuckled.

.

When he opened his eyes the sunshine was streaming on to the bed on which he lay, and he stared at the squalid room with a violent head-ache and perplexity. How had he come here? Where upon Earth was he? He stretched forth his hand mechanically for the button which would summon his valet, but his fingers met no button. There was only a dirty wall against his side; and to his right

a broken window; and at his feet such a washstand as never, never in his august existence, had he beheld before to-day.

He swore distractedly in German, and lay and thought.

Ah, he remembered! He had dined at Voisin's, and then they had all gone to a Music Hall, and at the Music Hall he had been tempted to give his people the slip. And—yes—yes—from there he had gone to a dancing place, and there had been a row, and insolent gendarmes had laid hands upon him. Gracious heaven! was he in prison? What a scandal, what a disaster; what food for the French papers, and what thunderstorms when it was known at home! All his limbs quaked, and the cold sweat of terror broke out on his brow.

He sprang up from his couch, and, opening the door, shouted lustily. No, he was not in prison. Evidently it was a private house. But *what* house—whose? This was horrible.

At last somebody was coming! A girl with a breakfast-tray, and something cool in a large glass.

"Good-morning, monseigneur," she said, entering.

"Good-morning," said the Prince. "Do you mind telling me where the devil I am, and how the ten thousand devils I came here?"

"Oh, with pleasure," answered Jeanneton, "but first your Royal Highness will refresh himself."

"You know me, girl?"

"Oh, yes, very well. This is Hock and seltzer-water, and there is ice in it."

He cursed again and drank.

"It is good," he allowed, setting down the empty glass. "Now let me understand who you are."

"I am a little girl," said Jeanneton demurely, "who is happy to have saved your Highness from arrest at the hands of the gendarmes. I knew your Highness, firstly, because I had read you were coming to Paris, and secondly because I have often had the honour of seeing your Highness's pictures."

"Well?" he growled.

"In the crowd last night your Highness was *unknown*, or such an indignity would never have been put upon you. Only, had you been imprisoned, I

need hardly point out that it would have become necessary to declare your identity."

The Crown Prince drew a long deep breath of relief.

"As it is," she continued after a pause, "your Royal Highness can make any explanation of your absence that your Royal Highness thinks fit. The affair rests between you and me. Between the Crown Prince of Westphalia, and Jeanneton, his humble servant." She dropped a low curtsey, while her visitor stroked his long moustache, and looked at her.

"Mademoiselle," he said admiringly, "you have acted with a discretion beyond your years—with a discretion that I can never sufficiently acknowledge. For the accommodation I have received at your hands,"—he looked at the truckle-bedstead, and the broken washstand as he spoke—"there must be a price. It is for you to name it."

"The rent is very dear in this quartier, Monseigneur," replied Jeanneton, "and I am engaged to be married, and need a trousseau. Would three

thousand francs sound expensive to your Highness—*tout compris*, even to the breakfast?”

That was the reason why the Prince's escapade never found its way into the public journals, and why Jean did not commit suicide after all. Whether he was worthy of the wife he won, is of course a question, but he did win her, and they are very happy to-day, and he is, moreover, a well-known painter. When his comrades envy him the distinguished people who are from time to time his guests, Jean and Jeanneton glance at each other and laugh. They are wondering what would be said if it were known that once—when she was a model in the Quartier Latin—the lady actually entertained the Crown Prince of Westphalia.

A SAD STORY.

THE END OF THE WORLD

A SAD STORY.

"YOU mean this, Stella?"

"I mean it absolutely."

"Then you are a flirt without heart and without conscience, and I pray Heaven that you may live to suffer as I am suffering now!"

The speakers were Miss Stella Winthrop, the niece of Lady Blessington of Tuft Manor, Herts, and Dr. "Jack" Vining, a young Medico with a brilliant college record, no influence, and no money.

Does not the situation explain itself? Their love affair had lasted five years—well, longer; for they had been engaged for five years—and then Miss Winthrop had been "taken up" by her aunt, whom she had scarcely known till then, and the pretty and

charming little country girl had been transformed into a debutante with ambitions. What chance for poor "Jack" Vining after this? Of course he had followed her up to Town; schemed to obtain meetings with her; eaten his heart out at perceiving the difference in her manner. Of course too, the young lady had primarily declared that the difference existed only in his own imagination, and Jack had felt wounded, and guilty, and miserable. But the crisis was bound to come at last, and it came when Miss Winthrop received an offer of marriage from Sir John Winchelsea, who was not more than thirty years her senior and had a rent roll of fully fifteen thousand pounds.

Then Jack received a letter asking him to call and the opening lines of this narrative had been part of the conversation.

"You are a flirt without heart and without conscience, and I pray Heaven that you may live to suffer as I am suffering now!" He sprang to his feet, and paced the room excitedly. "You have ruined my life; you have thrown aside my love (and

your own) for a motive that is despicable and base. You are selling yourself as utterly as ever a slave was sold in the East. Paugh! It is repulsive—by my soul I shudder at you.”

He declined to take her hand. He turned a deaf ear to her plea that he would “try to think more kindly of her.” “You will forget me in time,” she urged; and he answered: “I shall never forget you, and I will never forgive you. You have walked over me; you have been absolutely pitiless! whatever punishment befalls you, it serves you right. No misfortune that overtakes you will waken a spark of compassion in me. You are doing a degrading thing, and I despise you for it. Good-bye!”

But he loved her.

* * * * *

He paused on the landing pale and breathless. For seven years he had not heard her name, and now suddenly he had been summoned to her hotel. Did she know that the “English Doctor” to whom she had despatched a message was himself? He doubted it. She had treated him too cruelly, too

mercilessly ever to seek his aid. He turned the handle of the door, and went in. The room was empty.

He was relieved. It gave him a few moments more to think, to recover from his amazement. He had not known until ten minutes since that she was visiting the dreary little French town he had learnt to hate so. (Was that a likeness of her on the mantelpiece? He moved towards it rapidly, and picked it up. Yes, it was Stella Winthrop—Lady Winchelsea now—and she had not altered for the worse. More womanly—the lithe suppleness of the girl he had loved was gone—but as beautiful as of old. He would have recognised it anywhere. A footstep struck his ear—the frou-frou of skirts. He set the frame quickly down, and turned to meet her.

“Lady Winchelsea?”

“Jack!—Dr. Vining, *you?*”

“You sent for me,” he said; “I am the only English Doctor in the place. Am I right in supposing you would prefer to see a French one after all?”

“How hard you are,” she murmured. “Of course I had no idea, but—Dr. Vining, my boy is ill—he is always delicate, and he has got worse here—you won’t refuse to see him, now you’ve come?”

“I will do whatever lies in my power, Lady Winchelsea,” he said coldly. “Where is he?”

She glanced at him in momentary supplication. Then preceded him to an upstairs room in which the child lay moaning.

An Institution nurse was in attendance, and from her Vining obtained all the essential facts. When he re-entered the drawing-room with the mother, his face was grave.

“An operation is necessary,” he said.

“An operation? Oh no! oh surely not?”

“It would not be painful,” he said, “I should of course administer an anæsthetic. Still there is always a certain danger attending any operation. It is for you to decide whether it shall be performed or not. The benefit would be this:—”

He gave her a brief outline of what would be done, and the purpose it would serve.

"Don't let me persuade you," he added hastily. "Take the boy back to England, and have a higher opinion if you like. That is as you please."

The tears were running down her cheeks.

"My boy is my all," she faltered; "I am quite alone now. You knew, did you not?"—

"No," he said, "I did not know you had lost your husband. I condole with you. As to the matter in hand—?"

She drew herself up sharply.

"You advise the operation?"

"Decidedly," he answered, "there is no other course."

"But I mean at once, without waiting to return to England?"

"The pain your boy is suffering will increase until the cause is removed. And the pain continuing, he will have less vitality to withstand an operation. To-day he can bear it less well than he could have borne it yesterday. To-morrow he will not bear it so well as he would to-day. You must bear in mind

that it is a simple operation—as operations go, very simple.”

There was a pause of a few seconds, marked by the woman's irregular breathing. In the next instant she made an abrupt gesture.

“Let it be done, Dr. Vining, if you please. You will give him chloroform, you say?”

“I shall administer chloroform,” he said. “Yes. Good morning, Lady Winchelsea. Will you tell the nurse I shall be here at three o'clock?”

He was not as calm as he would have chosen to be for an affair of the knife. The unexpected rencontre with her had shaken him more than he cared to acknowledge, and his efforts to conceal the agitation he had felt during the interview had worn him too.

On reaching his house, he went into the surgery, and drank something out of a bottle,—hurriedly, gulping it down—and looked out such instruments as he would be likely to require.

While he inspected their surfaces, to see that nothing was wrong, he was asking himself if it was

possible that he loved the woman still. And he knew it *was* possible, he knew that he was as wildly in love with her to-day as he had been seven years before. It was infatuation, monstrous! He upbraided himself for it, but he knew he was fond of her, and could not conquer the weakness. He recalled her tones, her glances in their recent conversation. She was gentler than of old—time had chastened her. Her marriage with Sir John had not probably given her the unmitigated happiness she had expected from it, and her child—she was punished in her child. Poor Stella, poor little girl!

The bedroom was very quiet when he entered it that afternoon; the patient was sleeping—the nurse sitting by his side. It was as he would have wished. The preliminaries would not frighten the little fellow. Stella joined him a few minutes later but he begged her to withdraw. All was in readiness. He promised to call her the moment the operation was concluded, and administered the chloroform as soon as she had retired.

He drew the knife from its case, and the first excision was made. He was deft, Jack Vining; the nurse admired his dexterity.

He proceeded calmly. Everything was going well. Another minute, and it would be over. . . .

It was done. Then as the minutes went by, the doctor and the nurse looked at each other with horrified eyes. The child still did not stir. And as clearly as words the woman's eyes said, "You have given him too much of the chloroform, doctor," and as clearly as words the doctor's gaze fixed upon her said, "For God's sake, nurse, don't tell."

He had killed lady Winchelsea's boy. His brain reeled. With the best intentions, with the noblest aims, he had blundered foully, and he was guilty of his patient's death. The silence was frightful. It was broken by the nurse.

"He was not strong enough to stand an operation, doctor."

"No," said Vining, unsteadily. "How sad—I—I would not have had this happen for the world."

And he knew then that his secret was safe with

her. It was a professional matter—an accident of the operating-room—and it would never be uttered even between the two who knew of it.

But he never forgave himself for it—never. His was the most beautiful wreath laid upon the child's grave, and, in his agony and contrition, he spared himself no pains to assuage the grief of the mother. For weeks he was a daily visitor at her hotel, and though he lied to her about the cause of the death, his sympathy with her bereavement was as profound—and perhaps more so—than if he had acknowledged the truth.

And she—now utterly lonely—learnt to look for these visits of his; to miss him when he was absent; to upbraid herself for her treatment of him in the past. She told him once how bitterly she repented; she asked his forgiveness.

All the emotion that had been struggling for repression in the man for so long poured itself out then. He cried to her how dear she was to him; how valueless to him life without her was. Her tears

fell and he kissed them away. Their estrangement was at an end.

But happy as Jack and Stella are in their marriage—and Dr. Jack Vining is a fashionable physician to-day—there is one thing he has never confessed to his wife, and never will. It is the skeleton in the cupboard that he never unlocks, but which knocks sometimes and makes him suddenly shiver.

A WOMAN WHO EXPECTED
TOO MUCH.

A WOMAN WHO EXPECTED TOO MUCH.

DEAD—it was incredible! An hour ago he had been sitting at the breakfast-table with her, chatting upon ordinary topics. The post had brought him a letter from his sister; he had spoken of running up to town on the morrow to see her—discussed half-a-dozen trivialities. He had left the house with a laugh, waving his hand carelessly as he swung himself on to the horse—and now he was lying in an up-stairs room with his neck broken. He would never speak to her again. She was a widow!

When she had married him there had not been wanting people to tell her she was making a sacrifice. The ball was at her feet. She had sung with

éclat in all the capitals of Europe—a great future lay before her; she was the coming *prima donna* beyond question. Bischi—how well she recalled Bischi's face when she had told him of her engagement! Bischi had wrung his hands and plunged them furiously into his hair, and sworn with anger and then with tears, that she was ruining herself—that she was committing a sin—a sacrilege.

She had borne it all with a smile—the pathetic remonstrances and the wild reproaches. She loved Harry Seymour, and she was content to relinquish her profession to be his wife. He was not a rich man (old Sir John's second son); pecuniarily, as well as artistically, she was doing badly for herself; but she felt that existence without him would be a very tasteless and dreary affair indeed, and so she bade farewell to the footlights, to ambition, and public life, and settled down in a maisonnette in Berkshire, to a routine of heavy dinner-parties, and provincial teas.

It was a love match, if ever a marriage was, and she had never had cause to repent her choice.

Harry Seymour was as kind and indulgent and devoted a husband as she had expected him to be. Two years had passed since the day she became his wife, and there had never been an angry word between them. She loved him as dearly after the two years as she had done on the morning she went to the altar as his bride. And now suddenly, without warning, without a message of farewell, he had been taken from her: she was stunned.

Beside the chair on which she was sitting stood a table, which almost seemed to attest the dead man's presence. His tobacco-pouch lay on it; a French novel he had been reading, with the last page that he had come to turned down. His pipe was there; she picked it up mechanically. It had been only half-smoked out, and he had filled it while they had talked together after breakfast. Dead? Everything seemed to say the contrary. She could have expected to hear his voice, to look up and see him enter. Yet he was motionless — insensate — gone!

“Oh, God!” she moaned, “my God!”

As the day wore on she realised that it devolved upon her to wire the intelligence to his family. Sir John's address she knew, but of his sister's she was ignorant. The letter he had received that morning, however, would give it to her, and she forced herself to go to his dressing-room in search of it.

Here, too, everything spoke of him to her as she looked around. Things, commonplace in themselves, were endowed with a strange pathos. Slippers, smoking-jacket, the familiar objects of their daily association made the knot in her throat tighten swiftly, and the tears spring into her smarting eyes afresh.

The coat he had been wearing before he changed to pink had been tossed on to a chair, and she took it up—reverently. Yes; the letter was in the pocket; she recognised it as she drew it forth, for she had remarked as she watched him reading it, that it was written upon green paper.

“Dear Old Boy,—Thanks for the tenner, which was deuced handy. I say, can't you pitch a yarn

to the "missus," and run up to see me to-morrow? I've got a new dressing-gown that I look perfectly distracting in. *Verbum sap.*—Yours warmly, DOLLY ST. GEORGE.

"P.S.—Send me a wire."

What! She stood staring at the note with a face that was horrible. The little colour that had lingered in her cheeks dropped from them completely. For a few seconds she might have been a woman carved from stone. She did not even seem to breathe.

As her faculties returned to her, she became aware of the sound of sobs proceeding from the adjoining room, and, opening the door, she was dismayed to see her maid with her head bowed on the dressing-table, verging apparently upon hysterics.

"Evans!"

The servant—a neat and pretty girl of three or four and twenty—started to her feet in consternation, and made as if to escape, with a muttered apology.

"Don't go," said Mrs. Seymour drily—the tone of her own voice frightened her—"what were you crying for?"

Evans hesitated.

"Master, ma'am," she faltered; "I was so upset by the news."

Her gaze seemed fastened to the ground; her white lips twitched; she was the living picture of guilt and terror.

"What were you crying for?" repeated Mrs. Seymour, harshly. Five minutes ago she would have accepted the explanation unquestioningly; now her mind appeared to have given place to an influence she did not recognise. It was almost as if she were acting under hypnotic suggestion. "I will have the truth, Evans, I warn you; what are you keeping back?"

"Nothing, ma'am."

"That is a lie!" said Mrs. Seymour; "your face would tell me it was a lie, even if your manner did not. Come, you need not be afraid of me, girl. Be

honest, and you need have nothing to fear, I promise you. But if you prevaricate, or attempt to deceive me, I will turn you out of the house at an hour's notice, without a 'character.'

Evans burst into tears again, crying piteously.

"I'm frightened, ma'am," she gasped; "I *can't* tell *you*."

"On the contrary, it is me, and no one else, whom you *must* tell. I suspect—now you will not suffer if you are candid, remember—I suspect that——." She told her what it was she did suspect (the new and horrible distrust that had entered her brain), and the girl did not deny it. The truth lay bare in all its nakedness. The husband Mrs. Seymour had loved and trusted had been false to her—as false as man could be. She had been living in a fool's paradise; her world rocked about her.

"What is it?" she asked presently—"a boy?"

"Yes'm—a little boy. I don't know what will become of him now, I don't indeed."

"Where is he?"

"In the country, ma'am. Oh, you are ill!"

"I am not ill," said Mrs. Seymour faintly; "I am thinking, that is all—thinking what I ought to do. You can go—I will see you later."

The wretched servant left her, and she sat there in the bedroom, never stirring, for upwards of an hour. How much had happened in a single day! Her reason tottered under the magnitude of it. How different were her emotions from those with which she had mounted the stairs! Five minutes had stripped her of her illusions, banished her respect, and turned her grief to scorn.

False—colossally, systematically false! And he had been her idol, she had worshipped him!

The striking of the clock recalled her to herself. She went down into the drawing-room, and ordered Evans to be sent to her again.

"I am going to town," she said, "and I think it better for you to leave my service to-day. You tell me that Mr. Seymour was making a provision for

the child—that provision shall be continued. Leave me your address, and my lawyer shall write to you. But before you go I want you to pack my trunk.

Then she went to her *escritoire*, and wrote two letters. The first was to Sir John, acquainting him of his son's death, and saying that reasons into which it was unnecessary to enter prevented her remaining for the funeral. The second was addressed to Tito Bischi, Esq., and ran thus:—

“My dear old Friend,—I have lost my husband, and am returning to the stage. Don't ask me any questions; let it be enough when I say that you were right in your advice, and that I was wrong to disregard it. I see by the papers that Dellini sings as Juliet to-morrow night. I don't think they will refuse to let me have a box whatever the booking is like, and I want you to come to see me in it, and go back to my hotel with me afterwards to supper. We'll have a jolly evening.—Yours, as ever,

“EVA SEYMOUR.”

"See to my things at once," she said, handing the girl the letters; "and put my theatre-dress—the one with the pearls—at the top, Evans."

IN THE MATTER OF SARAH
BROWN.

IN THE WATER OF RAIN
WROTH

IN THE MATTER OF SARAH BROWN.

"It's all a tremendous worry," said Vansittart, feebly.

Dr. Musgrave laughed.

"I wish I could help you," he returned. "There was a young woman I knew who would have suited you in every respect. I've known her from a child, and could have vouched for her character. She has been with some friends of mine as nurse, and is highly qualified. Unfortunately she has just got a situation; I inquired last night."

"London teems," groaned Vansittart, "with nurses who would have suited me in every respect, but have just got 'a situation.' Anyone else?"

"No one else at the moment, I'm sorry to say. Why not advertise?"

"I *have* advertised. I have sent two advertisements to the *Post*, and had seven applicants in reply. Seven! and of those three wore spectacles, and one had apparently had a paralytic stroke. It is most inconsiderate of Robbins, upon my word."

"Robbins is the nurse who is leaving you?"

"Robbins is! But she is more—she is a treasure. I do not think I ever valued Robbins as she deserved till she gave me notice. She has been with the child ever since my wife died—three years—and I have never had a moment's trouble or anxiety, and the responsibility of being a widower with a helpless baby to take care of is simply keeping me awake at night. The interviews, too, are rapidly giving me grey hairs. I betray my deplorable ignorance at every question. There ought to be a book published on the subject. 'Hints to Widowers engaging a Nurse.' The wretches see my nervousness, and attempt to bully me when I say they won't do. One girl does seem all right, how-

ever; she came from the Registry Office this morning."

The respectable practitioner rubbed his hands.

"Well, well," he said, complacently, "then your worries, after all, are over! You mustn't look for too much, you know; you mustn't expect perfection. You have seen a suitable girl—the bother is at an end."

Vansittart glared.

"'Over'!" he echoed, "'at an end'! Why, I've got to go and inquire into her references. I've got to journey down to Twickenham, or Surbiton, or somewhere, and intrude on a woman who has never heard of me, and interrogate, and catechise her till I shall be positively ashamed of myself. Never lose your wife, doctor; you're a medical man, take every precaution. To be the father of a delicate child, without a woman to engage a nurse for her, is the most awful position possible for the human imagination to conceive."

And he was of the same opinion next day, when he found himself giving a nervous knock at the door

of the trim little villa that proved to be his destination. Vaguely, also, he was conscious that his own house compared badly with this *maisonnette*. The geraniums in the flower-boxes bloomed more freshly here; the arrangement of the window-curtains was more graceful. There was a spotlessness about the doorstep itself which he missed at home.

“Is Mrs. Hillary in?”

She *was* in. He was requested to walk into the drawing-room. He contemplated its screens, and china, and photographs, and ferns with augmented jealousy. Verily a woman was indispensable to a house, and this one, he imagined, must be a nice woman. The things about seemed to attest it. *Tant mieux*, she would be the more likely to help him through the interview with kindness. He had the masculine dread of ridicule, and the thought that he would look absurd inquiring whether a servant was honest, and truthful, and sober, and competent was awful to him.

He turned as the door opened.

“I have taken the liberty of calling——” he

began, and then he broke short with an exclamation: "Madge!"

"Frank—Mr. Vansittart! Is it possible?"

"More, it's a fact. But—but how extraordinary! And you haven't changed a bit!"

She laughed.

"And you didn't know it was I you were coming to see?"

"I hadn't an idea of it," he explained. "After all these years—and I didn't even know you were in England. I came—it sounds very silly—I came about a nurse's character."

"A nurse? You—you are married then?" said Mrs. Hillary.

"I married four years ago—I have been a widower for three. I've one child—a girl."

There was a little pause between them. He fingered his gloves, and his hostess played with a paper-knife.

"Your husband is well, I trust?" he asked at last with an effort.

She gave a palpable start. They had once been

so much to each other, and now he did not even know she was a widow.

"I lost him," she murmured, "soon after our marriage."

"I—I beg your pardon. Poor Jack! we used to be very good friends before—at one time, I should say. You have a child?"

"Bertie—a fine little fellow he is; you must see him before you leave. Of course you will stay to lunch?"

"I shall be very pleased," said Vansittart. "How strange it is to see you again, Madge. You have forgiven my hasty words when we parted, I hope."

"I am afraid I deserved them," she confessed, humbly, "but we were both very young and very hot-headed; I am glad no harm was done. You were happy in your married life?"

"Y-e-s;" he said; "oh, yes; I was happy. And you?"

"Jack was very kind and indulgent," she murmured. "Oh, yes; I don't suppose I merit any pity."

But tell me—I did not understand—you have really come about a servant's character! Who is she?"

"She is, I think, a 'Sarah Brown.'" He consulted his letter-case. "Yes; her name is Sarah Brown. I want her for my child. Recommend her if you can; another disappointment will kill me."

"You want her so badly!"

"I want *someone* very badly—Sarah Brown, or otherwise. You can form no idea of what it is to be a father, Mrs. Hillary—Madge; the responsibility of engaging a nurse is rapidly shortening my life."

"Poor fellow!" said Mrs. Hillary, with compassion. "Well, I should think Brown would suit you very well indeed; she is quite qualified, and in fact I'm rather sorry I parted with her."

"*Why* did you part with her?" he inquired. "You see I'm becoming *au fait* at the business. What was the cause of her leaving you?"

"Temper," she replied; "but to be quite, quite candid, I'm not sure the temper wasn't on my side. Anyhow, I can give her a good character."

"Then that's settled; how glad I am it's over."

You can't think how I dreaded this interview with an unknown 'Mrs. Hillary,' but somehow with you it wasn't difficult at all, even the domestic part of it. You were always to be relied upon, Madge—always, with one exception, that is to say! That is a likeness of you on the mantel-piece; may I look."

He took it down, and scrutinised it attentively.

"Good," he said, "distinctly good! They've caught your expression. When was it done? Recently—indeed! And it might be the girl I took down to supper at the Richmonds' ball seven years ago!" He put the frame back, and turned his gaze to the original. "So might *you*," he added. "*I'm* a middle-aged man; and *you* are just the same. Do you remember that night? You treated me very badly, Madge."

"You were very ungenerous, you mean," she retorted gently.

"Ungenerous? Nonsense. Three times—three vales running you gave Hillary against my express request. Well, well, he's gone. Poor Hillary! And

here are you and I two lonely folks meeting again by the purest chance. *Are you lonely?*”

“Sometimes a little lonely,” said Mrs. Hillary. “But I have my child, you know; and you, too, have yours. She must be a great solace to you.”

“If I might bring her to you one day,” he said, “it would please me awfully. She never sees a woman, except the servants, from one month’s end to another. Nor do I. We vegetate in that big gaunt house, the child and I, and in a manner that is positively pathetic.”

The maid announced that luncheon was served, and they went into the dining-room together.

“If,” continued Vansittart, when he had drunk a glass of very excellent sherry, and was turning his attention to a salmon-cutlet, “if you would look us up occasionally when you could spare the time, it would be a real charity on your part; it would indeed. Not alone to the baby, but to me. You—you make me younger, Madge, you make me forget seven whole years.”

“Seven whole years?” echoed the lady.

"Actually! In imagination I wear a rose in my buttonhole again, and am particular about the fit of my gloves. What an enchantress is a woman! You do all this in an hour, with a few kind words."

"It would not be so very startling," said Mrs. Hillary, "if you really wore a 'buttonhole.' Come, let me find you one! And—yes—I must certainly make time to look you up one day. Your condition, as you describe it, sounds simply heartrending."

She selected a rosebud from a glass on the table, and, taking advantage of the servant's absence, pinned it in his coat.

"That is better already," she said, contemplating him critically, her head a little to one side. "Do you know I think it was a very fortunate thing for you, my poor old hermit, that Fate threw you in my way again! A few years more by yourself, and you would have been beyond repair. Now you may still be done up."

"With care," agreed Vansittart; "with great care and skill, I incline to think it is possible. There is one thing though that continues to trouble me. Sup-

posing Sarah Brown should leave? You have given me a nurse, and I can view Robbins' retirement with equanimity. But supposing Sarah should want to desert me too?"

There must have been more significance in his tone than in his words, for Mrs. Hillary blushed, and trifled with the strawberries nervously.

"Sufficient for the day," she murmured.

"Is the good it has given me?" he concluded. "Well, perhaps so. It has certainly been a very generous day indeed! But you won't forbid me to look forward to the morrow, will you? A day like this without a 'to-morrow' would be as bad as an *hors d'œuvre* without a dinner."

"In some ways," said Mrs. Hillary, musingly, "you are nicer than you used to be. Look forward to to-morrow by all means—if it should be fine, you may even pay me another visit, with the child."

AN UNLUCKY RESURRECTION.

AN UNLUCKY RESURRECTION.

HE had treated her abominably; he had felt it at the time, and in retrospection—he was sure of it. Certainly, she was the last woman in the world he ought ever to have married; but that in no way absolved him, having made the choice, from the fulfilment of a husband's duties.

He was a painter; fanciful, capricious, in a word, unfaithful. The sentimentality of the artistic nature was allied to its instability in his case. She, on the other hand, was a typical girl of the narrower middle classes: placidly bigoted, painfully unadaptable. He had been miserable before they had been man and wife a month; what she suffered may be understood when it is said that she agreed to a separation before the end of the first year.

There had never been such a thing among the people she was accustomed to meet. A separation seemed to her hideous, appalling. She stood between two fires; such a scandal as this course that was suggested to her, and the ignominy of remaining with a husband who took no pains to conceal his infidelity.

She agreed, and they parted. He went to Paris; she returned to her father and the younger girls at home. Let us follow the man.

He took an apartment in the Latin Quarter; looked up his old friends, shook the dust (and ashes) of matrimony from his feet, and breathed a sigh of intense relief. He was free! Never had freedom appeared sweeter to anyone before. To be at liberty to go out or come in when he pleased, without reproaches, filled his soul with a sense of exhilaration wholly out of proportion to the cause. The world was as fair to him under these new conditions as it must have been to a prisoner liberated from the Bastille. He vowed to himself that he had never appreciated his bachelor life as it deserved. He was

as a school-boy; he laughed without reason, whistled while he worked, and committed a thousand excesses, less because he hankered to do so than that it seemed an ingratitude towards fate to neglect the restored opportunity.

So for seven years, with, as time went on, occasional intervals of remorse.

In the eighth year the intervals became more frequent. He was, he told himself, bored, hipped, an idler, and a *vaurien*. What work had he achieved? Nothing! Men with a tithe of his ability had their flats in the fashionable quarters, and their names in the journals, and their little nineday reign of popularity. Ephemeral? Perhaps so, but better than no celebrity at all, and their flats at least continued, though the owner's lustre might wane to an extent. He had had the ability to arrive, and he wallowed in the mud underneath the ladder which less worthy feet were climbing year by year. He should have been steady; he should have remained with Bertha, and done his duty like a respectable citizen. He did not say his failure was a "judgment" on him, or in-

dulge in his reveries in any cant; but he said he had made a mistake, that a married life was the best ballast, and that in throwing it overboard he had flung away his career at the same time. *Garçon, un absinthe!* Damn it! What a mess he had made of his life! From one grade to another Bertha had not been brilliant, but at any rate she had been pretty—a nice, clean, wholesome girl, refreshing to look upon. He remembered some of the times he had seen her eyes fill with tears, and he reproached himself too late for his brutality. “Beast!” he said, “no wonder she wouldn’t live with you!”

He rummaged among his portmanteaux one night, and succeeded in unearthing a photograph of her whose existence he had dimly recalled.

Yes; a pretty face, even a lovely one. Very English, very demure, but dainty, despite its faulty modelling! And the likeness was inadequate; it missed her colouring. Her eyes were blue, he recollected, and her complexion charming. She must be now—how old? Not much more than thirty, he should say. On the whole a desirable companion!

And, but for his own folly, she might have been with him to-day, cheerful to talk to, interested by this time in his profession. He wondered——. He put the thought aside as impracticable, but it often revived in him.

After all she was his wife; and doubtless she had missed him as woefully as he missed her. They say a woman never forgets her husband no matter what happens between them. Her father, to whose persuasions their separation had been due, was possibly dead by now also, and she had only her own inclinations for her counsel; she would be unbiassed by advice. Should he write? Should he express his penitence, and beg her to return to him? He kissed the photograph impetuously, and then with a half shame-faced laugh at his own weakness banged out of the house to meditate upon the matter in the open air.

For once the Boulevards had no gaiety in the aspect they presented to him. He sipped his coffee drearily outside his favourite café, staring with absent eyes at the light-hearted crowd passing the

table at which he sat. His soul was filled with melancholy. He would have liked to fall at his wife's feet, here and now, to implore her pardon; but to write—to phrase and piece his emotions upon paper, watching them cool in the process—was odious and repellent to him. Then, too, she might refuse—his pride took arms. To sue, to humble himself, and be refused! Come, come, it is not so bad as things were when all is said. His cigarette, his *bock*, his comrades, and the rest—why should he be discontented suddenly? Why not continue to find satisfaction in the present, and let the past rest quietly under the sod?

But the spell was on him, and he could not shake it off. He tried—no, to be literal, he attempted to try—but Bertha's face came between him and those of the women in the dancing-room to which he turned his steps. Bah! Their rouge, their dye, their leers and blandishments made him sick! His gaze went through the harlots into a vicarage-garden where tennis was in progress, and Bertha was wearing something white and home-made, and

saying with a quick girlish blush that she was pleased that he had come. He had not proposed to her then. In another life? No, only nine years ago. Good God!

Out into the streets again. Let him think, let him consider, let him frame his appeal! What could he say? "Sorry" — what a word! "Repentance," "passion of regret," "eagerness to atone"—words ran riot in his mind, tumbling over each other, burning on his brain.

Yes; he would write—at once. A *fiacre*—home! The lamp was out; he lit it with fingers that trembled, seating himself at the table where he customarily wrote, without pausing to remove his overcoat and hat.

When he had finished, he did not read the lines over. He saw that he had covered eight sides of paper, and he knew his emotions had been sincere. It was enough, and he was all-impatient for the letter to be gone.

That night he scarcely slept, and, next morning, rose haggard and unrefreshed. How soon could he

expect a reply! She might take a day, a week—ah, Heaven! she might even take a month—to consider before answering. A month of suspense; of feverish uncertainty! What could he do in the meanwhile?—he was fit for nothing! Yes; an idea struck him: he would rearrange his rooms, that they might be more fit for her habitation if she consented. Of course, they would not remain here permanently; but even to receive her they were impossible. He was glad that he had thought of it.

He hauled down the souvenirs that eight years' irregularities had sufficed to acquire. *Coryphées* and *equestriennes*, singers at the *cafés-chantants*, and models who had presented these reminders of their charms with tender, and often ill-spelt inscriptions. A few sketches from his own brush he preferred that his wife should not see. He made a bonfire of the lot.

The furniture was shabby—stained with tobacco, paint, and beer. Something must be done to it—and he might purchase a plant or two to stick about the place. Bertha had always liked to have plants

in the rooms, he remembered. It was foolish, unduly sanguine, to anticipate her arrival, but it *might* be, and he would be ready. He was ready before the answer arrived. He could scarcely see to read it when he had torn the envelope open. The lines danced into one another, and momentarily he put it down before re-attempting the perusal.

She wrote—he could almost hear her speaking—that she was willing to forgive. “Nay,” she said, “I *have* forgiven. The faults were not all yours, and now, besides, we shall understand each other better. I will come to you, dear, as you asked. Our past is dead; let us bury it, and begin a new life together, never to part again.” She signed herself “Your loving Wife.”

He prayed. He was not—he never had been—a religious man, but he prayed fervently then in thanksgiving, and in appeal to be worthy of the mercy she had shown him. Bertha was coming back to him—little Bertha! He could see her face light up as he took her to his breast. He felt her lissome waist within his arm; her cheek in imagination was

again against his lips. And in two days the dream might be reality.

He wired; a letter took too long. He wired, and now lived absolutely with but one thought. The knowledge that she was returning to him engrossed him to the exclusion of all else. The hours were leaden-weighted, the two days interminable. He was impatient with the impatience of a lover, and, *mirabile dictu*, he was in love with his own wife. Twenty times he reviewed the improvements he had effected; the spotless cretonne, and the fresh green ferns. He had taken more pains than usual also with his own costume, and when at last the eventful morning dawned, and he sallied forth to the railway-station, he bore himself with nervous elation, and even resembled in his toilette a bridegroom on his way to church.

The train was late. He glanced at the clock repeatedly. He lit a cigar to compose himself, but his mouth was dry, and the cigar tasteless to him, and after half-a-dozen whiffs he threw it away.

What was that? Yes; the signal at last. The

train roared into sight—swept panting almost to his feet. He eyed the compartments with a gaze that seemed to embrace them all at once. The passengers commenced to alight. She had not come—his heart turned sick within him. She had repented of her promise, and changed her mind. Could it be?

No! Someone spoke his name; a tremulous hand was laid upon his arm. The little colour that remained in his cheeks died away, and for an instant he stood staring blankly, choking in his throat the cry of disappointment that had almost escaped him.

Was this Bertha? This faded, dowdy, middle-aged *blonde* who was greeting him in an impossible black dress and bonnet; peering at him with a plain, pathetic face that was a ledger of every hour of grief she had suffered since they last met? This was Bertha!

“George,” she said, “Oh, George dear, at last!”

“At last, my darling!” he answered hoarsely.

“We must never leave each other any more. Oh, George, how glad I am! How happy!”

"You had better let me see to your trunks," he muttered, "and—and get them put on a cab. Wait here a moment, will you?"

Then he turned up the platform alone in quest of them—alone, he told himself, miserably, for the last time in his life.

PEPITA'S JOKE.

REPTILES & BIRDS

PEPITA'S JOKE.

THERE was a story published some thirty years ago which made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of many people. It was the story of a schoolboy who was taken to the pantomime, and fell in love with one of the fairies. His father correctively offered him an introduction to his divinity, and of course—or there would have been no moral to the tale—she turned out to be a slatternly woman of middle-age who kept a greengrocer's shop, and was the mother of thirteen children.

I have said the story made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of many people, because that is the easiest explanation of the fact that to keep a greengrocer's shop and be the mother of thirteen children is regarded as the inner life of the

coryphée by quite a considerable number of fairly intelligent persons. Mr. Nathaniel Lambkin, for one, had always viewed the little narrative as a worldly lesson, and when Edward, his light and his hope—Edward, fresh from the fifth form, who was destined to succeed to the drapery business (the oldest in the town), and who in time might doubtless rise to the dignity of Churchwarden—when Edward, I say, told his father in confidence that he was ensnared by the charms of Miss Pepita Vavasour, whom they had seen together from the pit a few nights previous, Mr. Lambkin first reproached himself for having been betrayed into taking him into this den of Satan, and then recalled the subtle wisdom of the parent in his favourite tale.

“Edward,” he said gravely, “I am astonished!”

Edward—callow youth—blushed furiously.

“I am sure she is sweet and pure, papa,” he said—his expressions, like his years, were tender, “I cannot get her face out of my mind. Ever since that evening I have thought of her constantly.”

It should be said that the conversation was due

to Mr. Lambkin, senior, having discovered in the youngster's room a photograph of the lady, which he had covertly purchased at the cost of two shillings.

"It is very improper of you," observed Mr. Lambkin, "very improper and ridiculous. I had a higher opinion of you, Edward—you shock me! You are of course too young to suspect the fact, but the person is without question old enough to be your mother. If you had ever seen, ahem, play-actresses without their paint and—er—spangles, you would be aware that, off the stage, they are very plain and uneducated creatures indeed. It is only boys of your age who do not know as much. When you are older you will smile at the stupidity of believing such a person is really attractive."

Secretly he found it not unpleasant to adopt the tone of a man of the world to a listener who believed in his experience, and he continued unctuously.

"Now this woman who has taken your fancy, my lad, probably keeps a poor shop in the daytime,

where she wears a dirty dress, and sells potatoes or candles. She has a swarm of neglected children, and a husband of the labouring class, who gets drunk on Saturday nights, and beats her. If she knew how you were thinking about her, she would laugh in your face and call you a 'blooming Jay,' or some vulgar name such as these people use. Come now, be a sensible young fellow, and put all this silly nonsense out of your head. We will go home to-morrow, and the next time we come to London you will be ashamed to remember your folly."

Edward listened to the exhortation meekly, but, though he offered no opposition to being withdrawn from the vortex of the Metropolis, it did not prove so easy a thing to banish his enchantress from his memory as the other had anticipated.

He was promoted to a frock-coat, and took his place in the drapery business, being initiated into its mysteries with a solemnity befitting so important an event, but the charms of silk and silesia, of cambric and calicoes, left him numb, so to speak, untouched by their splendours, and it was evident his

thoughts still dwelt on the image of Pepita Vavasour singing "Nobody's Sweetheart but Mine, Love," in pale pink tights in the limelight of the Audacity stage.

The only course to be adopted under such circumstances—so opined Mr. Nathaniel Lambkin—was to show the lad the absurdity of his ways by ocular demonstration. He would present him to his idol, and let him be disillusioned. The misguided man chuckled at his thought. He would play the kindly, cynical father of that beautiful story in a Christmas number which he had read in his own youth. Edward should see "Miss Vavasour" weighing the cabbages or candles in her slum, and, turning to him, bowed with shame, cry "Father, father, take me home!"

He decided to be frank; it would never do to let her think that *he* supposed she was a *houri* too! He wrote to her at the theatre, telling her plainly that his son, who was very young, had fallen in love with her on the boards, and saying that he wished—as a sensible, hard-working woman, he was sure she would assist him—to let the noodle see her by

daylight. "I do not," he wrote, "desire you to make any change in your dress—no cleaning up or anything of the kind. If in your work in the shop you usually find it more comfortable to have your sleeves rolled above your elbows, do not pull them down for *us*. Let the lad meet you just as you are, be yourself, my good woman, that is all I want of you. There will be a sovereign for you when we go away, and we shall not interfere with business at all; you can continue serving while you talk to us."

He posted this communication with much satisfaction, and waited developments with a twinkle in his fatuous eye.

Now Pepita Vavasour, as she called herself, though she had been born a Polly Brown, was as pretty, and dainty, and cheeky a little devil as the Audacity was able to boast, and when the epistle reached her, and her primary impulse to treat it as the communication of a lunatic had subsided, she determined to respond to it, and "teach the old buffer a lesson," if his conception of her were really genuine. She read his note and rehearsed the reply

to Lord Gaybird, and Charlie Norreys of the Blues, and some other old friends, at supper that night, and they laughed themselves nearly hoarse, vowing it was the richest thing they had heard in all their lives, by Jove it was! Her correspondent received his reply the very next afternoon.

Miss Vavasour wrote that she was sorry she was not engaged in a shop, but if the gentlemen would call at the address she gave, she would be allowed to see them. The best time for them to come would be when tea had been cleared away—about half-past five. She remained Mr. Lambkin's "humble and obedient servant."

"And somebody else's too, that's pretty evident," the draper remarked to himself good-humouredly. "Edward, I'm running up to London to-morrow, and you may as well go with me. The change will be a fillip to you. What do you say?"

Edward said he did not mind if he did. The scheme of effecting a visit to the delightful theatre may have kindled in his mind; anyhow, he showed

interest, and, on the journey, even displayed enthusiasm.

They reached town in time for early dinner, and then Mr. Lambkin proposed Madame Tussaud's. Edward did not glow at Madame Tussaud's, but his senior, full of inward jubilation, was talkative and facetious. After the waxworks, they had tea at an A. B. C. place, and here the parent made his announcement.

"My son," he said portentously, "I have not brought you to London to-day idly; I had a deep and serious motive, Edward. I wished to show you how ridiculous your infatuation is! I have watched you, I have observed you carefully, and now we are going together to see your Miss Vavasour. I am a man of the world, Edward, and I know that an inch of experience is worth a bale of preaching. Come!"

In his earnestness he would have left without paying the bill, but the cashier called to him from her desk.

The 'bus put them down at the corner of the street, and they entered the building, Nathaniel pro-

nouncing the heavenly name. The boy's heart was thumping so exquisitely that he was but vaguely conscious he had stepped into his first lift.

"To the right," said the attendant when it stopped at the third floor. "End of the passage."

Nathaniel pressed the bell, his son being still incapable of anything but rapture. A trim maid-servant opened the door, and the draper looked at her expectantly. She was not Miss Vavasour, however; she said Miss Vavasour would be with them directly. Would they step into the drawing-room?

They did. It was an entirely charming room, furnished in a fashion that was unfamiliar to them both, and the draper decided it was a "good place." He wondered whether the "gal" was housemaid or not. She had not admitted them, but perhaps the lady kept two.

He was still debating the point when his hostess greeted him. She had entered quietly, and he paused bewildered.

"Mr. Lambkin?" she said.

"Yes, madam," he stammered, "I have taken the

liberty of calling to see—er—a young person—a young theatrical person who ——”

“Miss Vavasour,” she said, “here she is!”

“You?” he ejaculated.

“I! Please sit down; and—this is your son, I suppose? How d’ye do; I’m very pleased to meet you.”

She wore a tea-gown of pale blue satin and lace, flowing, irresistible, and provoking. Her golden hair was curled bewitchingly. She threw herself into a chair, displaying the tiniest of slippers and a delicious glimpse of stocking, and then she smiled till Nathaniel’s head began to whirl.

“This is some mistake,” he muttered.

“Oh no, papa,” exclaimed his hopeful, “I should have known Miss Vavasour anywhere.”

She laughed again—merrily.

“That is very nice of you,” she said. “I’m really as pretty as you pictured me? I *am* glad! Come and sit down over here, and tell me all about it. You’re really, truly, and desperately in love with me, eh?”

Edward cast a hesitating glance at her, at his

father, and at her again. His colour came and went; but he was equal to the occasion.

"Really, truly, and desperately!" he said.

Mr. Lambkin plunged his hands into his scanty hair, and contemplated his prodigy with a frenzied gaze.

"Edward!" he gasped.

Edward paid no attention. He had accepted his charmer's invitation and was on a stool at her feet—the adorable feet in the fascinating slippers.

"You are every bit as lovely as I knew you must be," he declared.

"And you've looked forward to meeting me?"

"I didn't dare to expect such happiness."

"Oh, you little dear," said Pepita, "what a lark you are!"

"Miss Vavasour," said the draper thickly, "I—I must ask for an explanation, madam. You are Miss Pepita Vavasour of the Audacity Theatre?"

"I am," she replied innocently, "and of No. 2, Prince Consort Street, where I have the pleasure of seeing you."

"And—and you are not a servant?"

"I am the servant of the British public," said she, the actress aflame in her.

"Then I have been fooled and deceived."

"You fooled and deceived yourself, my good sir, though I don't complain; your son is very pleasant company. Edward"—she stooped and tapped him on the shoulder—"do you smoke cigarettes? You do, good boy! If you bring me that box there, we'll smoke together."

The crisis was reached, something must be done. Mr. Lambkin strode to the hearth, and seized his son by the arm.

"Edward," he said sternly, "we will leave this house immediately. Take your hat, sir."

Pepita did not speak, but she looked. Her appeal was more powerful than the parent's. Edward fetched the box, and resumed his seat on the stool. Mr. Lambkin raged for ten minutes, and left the house alone.

When the father and son met again next evening neither referred to the occurrence.

But it was an expurgated version of Pepita's joke that that young lady gave to Lord Gaybird.

A MAD ENGLISHMAN.

A MAD ENGLISHMAN.

MRS. CECIL BERKELY DE LA HOOPE had just parted with the sum of two francs, and was conscious that she had committed an extravagance. That Mrs. Cecil Berkely de la Hoope could feel herself extravagant for spending two francs demands an explanation; and it lies in a nutshell—the de la Hoopes were broke. They were not “hard up,” they were not “temporarily short,” they were *broke*. They were taking all their meals in the hotel because they had not the money to go to a restaurant, and pay cash for them; they trembled each time the chambermaid entered their room with a letter lest she should be bringing them the bill; and Georgina—pretty little “Georgie,” who had never been born to know what economy meant—was reduced to “doing up” an old hat with two francs’ worth of

flowers, which she had selected from the cheapest boxes that the "Printemps" had to show.

She was sitting in their bedroom, trying them this way and that, when De la Hoope entered. He looked very fashionable, and well dressed, despite his impecuniosity. A man has an advantage over a woman insomuch as his wardrobe does not need replenishing so frequently. That fur-lined overcoat of his with the sealskin collar—how long ago had it not been bought! In Society—and they were "in Society," the De la Hoopes—nobody dreamed of the straits to which he had sunk. Georgie had to refuse an invitation sometimes, for lack of a suitable toilette, but Cecil was able to go everywhere, and did—though he frequently had to walk for want of a cab fare. Only the crash was imminent, and his expression was gloomy as he came in.

"Well, little woman?"

"Well, *mon petit mari?*"

He divested himself of his outdoor things, and stretched his legs upon the hearth. It was six o'clock on a January afternoon.

"This is a lively condition of affairs," he said.

"Isn't it! Do you know, Cecil, I fancy the bill is coming up! Madame's face had a look of 'settlement' about it when I passed her in the hall this morning. And when it does come up, it will have to be paid."

"It will have to be paid," agreed Cecil.

"But—but how?"

"Heaven knows," said Cecil, "I don't, and that's a fact. We shall find ourselves on the pavement with our luggage round us—if she will let the luggage go! If we could only have lasted three months longer, my allowance would have been in, and pulled us through. But three months!—we can't prolong the agony for three weeks!"

"Your father wouldn't—but I know he wouldn't; what's the use of asking."

"No, he wouldn't. The subject of advances, as you remember, has been definitely settled between us."

"It's a pity," said Georgie meditatively, "that I never bought more jewellery than I did—jewellery is always portable property, and you could have paid another visit to the Mont de Piété. Heigh-ho."

The young man groaned his response, and, lighting a cigarette, watched his wife's white fingers sewing the flowers on to the felt brim.

"What an awful mixture," he remarked.

"This combination is the fashion," answered Mrs. De la Hoope. "Is it possible you haven't observed it? Every woman in Paris is wearing violet and cerise—and some add yellow, though *I* haven't gone so far as that. It was very wrong of me to spend the money, but all the same it will practically give me a new hat. You see I catch it up here—so—and with a mass there—like that——."

"How much?" asked Cecil Berkely.

"Two francs, dear, and very cheap they are!"

"Two francs wasted!" he said critically. "Now really, viewing it dispassionately, isn't it perfectly atrocious, such a mixture? Could anything well be uglier? And it is silly besides; what would you say to *me* if *I* bought a wreath of violent red and purple flowers, and trimmed my chimney pot with it? You'd call me a lunatic."

"Men do not wear artificial flowers."

"But the principle is the same. Why should scarlet and purple flowers be any more sensible on your hat than on mine? Yet I wouldn't walk down the Boulevards with such things stuck on my head for a thousand pounds."

"More fool you then," said Georgie; "but I only wish someone would give you the chance! It would be an easy solution of our difficulties."

Their eyes met, and the same idea struck them simultaneously in the second's pause.

"Jove," said Cecil, "I wonder if I could bounce somebody into making me the bet!"

"Oh," cried Georgie, "if you only could, darling!"

He smoked excitedly; "This is really an inspiration," he said. "It is a master-stroke of finance! But it requires the most delicate handling—a bungler would spoil everything! I must think."

His courage had come bubbling back to him with the notion. He rang the bell, and ordered a *petit verre* and a *vermouth* for his wife.

"I shall go to the club to-night," he said, "I shall see who is there. I am going to do the thing."

You wait! To-morrow I shall have failed to pull it off, or we shall be dining at Paillard's, with the receipt from this infernal Madame in our pocket, and a balance at the bank. Georgie, your blessed folly in spending those two francs will save us yet—I say it."

He had one franc fifty on his person when he sauntered leisurely into the Cercle des — at ten o'clock that evening, and dropped into an easy chair beside the fire. But his dress clothes were immaculate and his confidence was as the confidence of a duke. The room as yet was empty; he watched it fill, with a calculating eye. It was sink or swim with him to-night. The fingers that held his cigarette even trembled a little, though habitually, in the worst of his crises, Cecil Berkely de la Hoope was calm. Nevertheless there was no trace of discomposure in his tone later when he began to talk. He had judged his opportunity well, and had precisely the little knot of listeners he had desired.

"I never wear a *boutonnière*," he was saying; "the flowers that nature gives us are poor and insipid beside the productions of velvet and dye

which we disregard, and since I may not wear the one I *will* not wear the other."

"This good Cecil!" murmured one of his auditors, "He is always so amusing."

"But it is true," insisted De la Hoope. "I mean it seriously. Those flowers you see in the shop windows, and sold for women's bonnets, those are ART—they are exquisite! In which of her creations does nature give us such glorious variety, such perfect form and colour?"

He flicked away his ash, and, observing that the discussion might now be regarded as well alive, affected to have grown tired of it.

"Where have you been to-night, Chantmerle?" he inquired with a half yawn.

Chantmerle bit.

"I have been to the Renaissance," he said, laughing, "and you see I wear one of the *boutonnieres* that you despise."

"It is merely a matter of taste," drawled De la Hoope, "or rather it is a want of taste. In fifty years time, if we live so long, we shall see appreciation given where it is due. We advance slowly."

Chantmerle, who was "dandy" to the finger tips, and prided himself upon it, knit his brows with annoyance.

"We need a leader, we others," he said ironically; "and perhaps he has arisen!"

"Perhaps he has," replied De la Hoope; "At all events there is plenty of scope for his reforms." His eyes fell on the hat which one of the men present had set down on the table beside them. "Among the first things he will do, will be to beautify such a head-gear as that!" he added.

"Oh, but that is perfectly true," exclaimed Chantmerle, "our hats are ugly—it is a fact. Yet how would you improve them?"

Cecil took the cigarette from his mouth, and leant forward solemnly.

"My friend," he said, "have you ever in your experiences observed the hat of a woman before it is trimmed? Believe me, though the shape varies, it is no more lovely than that thing there. Yet how coquettish, how charming, is her hat when it is finished! Do you grasp the application?"

"You would trim—*trim*—our hats with flowers, like a woman's? a tall—a silk hat?"

"Precisely," said De la Hoope impressively. "I would trim them with the cerise and violet flowers that women are wearing now."

Everybody broke into laughter. They thought they were talking to a *farceur*.

"You are not in earnest?"

"I am perfectly in earnest! And what is more, I firmly intend to do it. I shall take my stroll one of these days with my hat trimmed just as I say; and then——" he shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of well-simulated impatience, "Oh, you sheep! then you will see how well I have judged, and you will all follow my example."

"You would never dare," cried Chantmerle, "you would never dare to show yourself on the Boulevards for a single hour in such an absurd attire!"

"'Dare,'" De la Hoope echoed, "You overlook the fact that I tell you everybody will admire it. No courage is necessary—I shall be admired."

"I bet you a thousand louis you will not come

to-morrow afternoon, for an hour, and to go everywhere, I bet you a thousand louis!”

“Done!” said De la Hoope quietly. “I accept the bet. You will be in the Café de la Paix to-morrow at four o’clock, gentlemen, to see whether I comply with the conditions. *Au plaisir.*”

* * * * *

“It was a tolerably bad hour, Georgie,” he laughed, as they sat together at their table at Paillard’s the following evening, “and there were moments when I felt my cheeks growing as red as the flowers themselves, but it has pulled us through, duckie, hasn’t it! Between ourselves, I never had an idea what a long time an hour was till this afternoon—it’s given me a very fair notion of eternity. However, nobody has any suspicion of the truth. I said afterwards that I was ‘disappointed’; the generation was even slower ‘to learn’ than I had supposed—and they will only call me a ‘mad Englishman’ at the worst. What luck—a thousand louis! Waiter, another bottle of champagne! We’ll go out to-morrow morning, Georgie, and I’ll buy you the prettiest bonnet you can see!”

AN UNLUCKY DOCTOR.

AN UNLUCKY DOCTOR.

DR. CHILTERN did not go to the ball without misgivings. He was aware that Miss Denison would be there—indeed he knew that her presence was the magnet which attracted him—and more than once he had vowed to himself not to see Miss Denison again. His meditations, in fact, had been entirely praiseworthy. Their positions, he had reminded himself, were painfully unequal. The girl was the daughter of Lady Denison, of Craft Manor and Queen's Gate, while he was a young man in receipt of between five and six hundred a year. His infatuation was absurd! Yes, he saw the situation, the folly of his attachment, with dispassionate eyes, but he had fallen in love very deeply indeed, and his reason had not been strong enough to com-

bat temptation, albeit he condemned himself for yielding to it. She was certainly an excuse for any weakness, he thought, as he entered the rooms half an hour later. A tall, willowy girl with a transparent complexion, and features that came near to being perfect. She noticed his approach with a gratified smile, and the next moment he was greeting her, indifferent to the warning glance he had detected on the part of her mother.

"I hoped I should find you here," he said, "and yet I doubted it."

"Why?"

"Because I hoped it so much."

She laughed and unfurled her fan.

"You always say pretty things. The knack ought to bring you a fashionable practice, Dr. Chiltern."

"I wish it would," he answered, "that or something else. A fashionable practice would be very welcome just now. As a matter of fact I am thinking of throwing up what I've got, and looking for an opening in pastures new."

"You think of leaving England."

"I am considering it. Will you give me a waltz—perhaps it will be our last, you know?"

She tendered him her card, and he scribbled his initials in more places than one. Then her partner claimed her, and he stood looking after her with a rather melancholy gaze on his earnest face.

Did she like him or not? She had assuredly encouraged him, but that might mean nothing—just her way, an amusement to pass the time. He had never been able to determine definitely whether or no there was anything serious in Ethel Denison's feeling for him, and when he was wise, he told himself that it did not matter. On the whole it was doubtless best there was not, and yet—and yet——

An hour afterwards prudence went down before impulse, and he told her that he loved her, and asked her to be his wife.

Their valse was over, and he had led her into the conservatory on the pretext of discussing his projected departure. The strains of the music still

reached them, mingling with the tinkling of the rose-water, playing with the cork-work rocks and ferns. She leant back in her chair and closed her eyes a moment. When she opened them she met his own bent intently on her.

"Tell me all," she said softly; "you are really going away?"

He hesitated.

"Not if you wish me to stay!"

"I? Of course I—do not like to lose my friends."

"I am *not* your friend! Miss Denison—Ethel—you know—you must have seen—how dear you are to me. Darling, you are all my world! I am a poor man, I never meant to speak, I meant to keep my secret to the end, but I was not strong enough. I have nothing to offer you, I can only beg you to wait; but if you *will* wait, O my dearest, I will worship you all my life. Answer me—are you offended?"

"No," said Miss Denison faintly, "I am surprised! I did—I did not know you cared about me like that."

"And are you sorry?"

She shook her head. His hand covered hers. There was an instant in which he foretasted Paradise. Then they both realised they were engaged, and that there would be the devil to pay when her mother knew it.

The man was the first to refer to it.

"Your mother must be spoken to," he said ruefully; "I am afraid she will hardly be pleased."

"I will speak to her first," said Miss Denison. "I will prepare her for your visit. Come to-morrow afternoon—Philip!"

It was the first time she had called him by his Christian name. His pulses throbbed triumphantly, and he kissed her again.

"Nothing shall part us, Ethel?"

"Nothing," she said firmly. "Shall I own something to you? You have made me happier than I have ever been in my life. Now take me back to the rooms."

He did not hail a hansom to bear him home that night, he walked. Exercise was essential to his

excitement. There had never been so perfect a night before. The stars had never shone so brightly; the breeze had never been so sweetly caressing in its play. He was going to marry Ethel Denison—Ethel Denison loved him! His cup was full. Temporarily, at least, he asked no more of Fate. And in imagination he rehearsed a dozen interviews for the morrow, in which the dreaded “Mamma” extended her jewelled hand to him benignantly, and addressed him as “My son.”

But it did not happen quite like that. He presented himself at the house in Curzon Street nervously, and was ushered into the drawing-room where Lady Denison greeted him with a stately politeness which he instinctively knew foreboded ill. Nor was his presentiment at fault; her first words confirmed it.

“My child has been telling me of the—er—the compliment you have paid her, Dr. Chiltern,” she began. “What a pity—what a great pity—you should have been so imprudent! Believe me, I regret it more than I can say.”

He pulled his moustache, and gazed at her helplessly.

"I confess that I scarcely expected you to be delighted, Lady Denison," he replied, "but I do sincerely trust you will not refuse your consent to the engagement. I think I have a fair share of ability, and I'm in a profession which, as you know, has rich prizes to offer."

Lady Denison waved his expostulation aside; she, so to speak, demolished his prospects with a gesture:

"I hope you will do well," she said, "but for my daughter to engage herself to a man who has still his way to make in the world is perfectly out of the question. You must see as much yourself. May I give you some tea? No? Well, I sympathise with you very much; I am very sorry. I do not think there is anything more I can say on the subject."

"May I see Ethel?"

"I looked for the request, of course. Yes, you may see her. But I must ask you to consider it the

last interview between you. You will find that she understands it is to be so."

"Thank you."

He plunged his hands into his pockets, and roamed aimlessly about the room until she appeared. He thought she had never looked more beautiful than when she entered. Her grief had not reddened her eyes—only imparted a becoming paleness to her face, which made him yearn over her. She was irreproachably dressed also—a little too irreproachably, another man might have been excused for thinking, under the circumstances. She put out both hands silently, and he caught her to him, as Lady Denison slowly withdrew.

"Ethel, you will be true to me?"

"I will be true always!"

"Thank God! Oh, my love, I shall win you yet. I feared—I feared you might have been talked over, or coerced."

"Mamma was very vexed, but I love you, Philip, and I shall not change my mind. I will wait for

you, and, though we may not see each other, we can write."

"My angel!"

He left the house white and grave. It behoved him to do something speedily to command success. She had pledged herself to wait for it, and it must be done. How? What could a man do—how could he succeed quickly or brilliantly enough—to repay such constancy as this?

* * * * *

When they met again it was six months later, and the scene was the Zoological Gardens. A quieter place for a rendezvous than the Zoological Gardens in the Winter can hardly be devised. It did not need to overhear their first words to understand that the end had come; Chiltern's expression said that, and the girl's, as they shook hands, and proceeded along the sloppy gravel path in quest of a seat.

"I had your letter," he said, coldly. "It has not taken long, Ethel, for you to grow tired."

She shrugged her shoulders: "If it is to make reproaches—"

"Oh, I am not going to reproach you," he exclaimed, bitterly; "what right have I? You promised, and you have broken your promise. All is said."

"I have my mother to consider as well as myself. You know her objections, and—well, I have given in! *I* have to live with her—*you* don't. It is easy enough for you to be strong and resolute. For me it was a different matter."

"Then it is good-bye? Really and definitely all is at an end between us? Ethel, supposing—I say 'supposing'—my position should have improved before you have seen anyone else you think you can care for, may I ask you again? Dearest, leave me that tiny hope. If I succeed, and you are still free, may I come to you—will you let things be as they were between us once more!"

He leant forward eagerly; his lips were twitching. Miss Denison traced arabesques on the path with the point of her parasol.

"You don't quite understand," she murmured, nervously. "I have obeyed Mamma, and ——"

"And what?"

"What you ask can't be. It can never be because ——"

"Because ——?"

"Because I am going to marry Sir Jonas Grant!"

There was a long pause, and then the restraint he had been putting upon himself gave way, and the passion that was in him flamed out.

"So—you are *jilting* me!" he cried. "The truth is told at last. A rich man has proposed to you, and you have flung me over. While I thought it was merely cowardice, I could forgive you, though your desertion broke my heart, but for this I will never forgive you. I am ashamed to think I loved you. I am disgusted with myself."

"Good-bye," she said, rising. "You are insolent, and I do not care to prolong our interview."

"Good-bye," answered Chiltern, "but do not think you will be happy. You have thrown aside devotion for the sake of ambition, and you will live

to repent it. I loved you, and you loved me. You have chosen to disregard the fact, and to sell yourself to a man for whom you care nothing at all. May Heaven forgive you, Miss Denison, *I* never will!"

He walked by her side to the turnstile, put her into a cab, and parted from her mutely with a bow. Already remorseful for the vehemence into which he had been betrayed, he breathed a silent prayer for her welfare even as the wheels began to revolve. Miss Denison, however, could not know it, and the pallor of her face was caused as much by terror as by grief. It seemed to her that a curse had been launched at her. The tears gathered in her eyes, and trickled down her cheeks. She had done wrong, of course, but it was not all her fault;—she had been bullied into it. She was fond of him, and he had cursed her.

"Where to, Miss?" asked the cabman, with his ear to the "butterfly."

A sudden revulsion, of feeling seized her. He had spoken the truth—she loved him, and it was

her whole life that was at stake—hers and his. She would throw herself in his arms; she would be his wife in spite of all. “Back!” she said, chokingly.

Chiltern was not in sight. The long melancholy road was deserted. He was, as a matter of fact, in a hansom ahead of her, speeding home. His mind was in a tumult. He was in the humour in which a temperate man may deliberately set himself to the task of getting drunk, or commit any other folly of which human nature is capable. His love for Ethel Denison was no mere fancy, it was the passion of his life; and the knowledge that he was never to hold her to him again, never to feel her clinging hands in his, or the pressure of her face against his lips any more, made him half mad.

He sprang out as the cab drew up at his house, and threw the man twice his fare, from no spirit of generosity, but from simple heedlessness.

As he unlocked the door with his latch-key, he became aware that a young lady, with brilliant golden hair, and a Lowther Arcade complexion, was

smiling to him from the opposite side of the way. A momentary inspection showed him that she was a chorus-girl, from the Frivolity Theatre, whom he had recently attended.

She crossed the road, smiling still.

"Good afternoon, Dr. Chiltern," she said; "I was just coming to see you."

"Were you?" he answered; "come in, then."

He led her into the sitting-room, and told her to take a seat while he divested himself of his coat.

"Well," he enquired, when this was accomplished, "and what can I do for you, Miss St. George?"

"I've come to ask you what I owe you," she said, archly. "I *was* going to write, but I thought it better to call."

"Why?"

She laughed out loud this time. "I guessed you might let me down lighter."

She was a decidedly pretty girl, despite the too golden hair, and the art she had invoked for her complexion. She had a *penchant* for him, also, he had fancied, from certain glances with which he had

been favoured, though he had not been disposed to give the matter much attention hitherto. As she made her suggestion in respect of his account, she put her head coquettishly to one side with her eyes sparkling at him, and leant slightly forward, her hands resting on the table. He noticed that they were provoking eyes, and that the hands were small, and daintily gloved.

Miss Denison's cab stopped with a jerk outside, and she descended, and rang the bell impulsively. The housekeeper answered her:—

“Dr. Chiltern has not come in yet, I think.”

“I will wait, please.”

She turned the handle, and advanced a step into the room. Chiltern was kissing the chorus-girl at the exact moment. Then he saw her, and there was a pause that appeared to last a lifetime. It was broken by the rustle of the intruder's skirts as she withdrew, and by a stifled oath of Chiltern rushing to overtake her in the hall.

“I beg your pardon,” said Miss Denison, icily,

“but in the hurry of our leave-taking I forgot to say something. I must beg you to return my letters, and—I have brought you back your ring!”

NIPPED IN THE BUD.

LIBRARY OF THE MUSEUM

NIPPED IN THE BUD.

"AND you really find me companionable?"

"I am sure I find you adorable."

"No, no! Of course you find me 'adorable'; but *companionable*? That is quite a different matter. Do you think you will always have a companion in me?"

She opened her earnest eyes at him inquiringly. Her expression for the moment was pathetic, and it pained him.

"Dearest," he exclaimed, "what on earth do you mean? Have you conjured up a bogie between us so early? I love you as deeply as a man ever loved the girl he was going to marry. Don't let me feel that my profession is a drawback to your happiness, or I shall hate it."

"You are so clever," said Miss Mallory, slowly.

"I am proud of it, of course—proud to be engaged to a man whose name everybody knows, but—well, literary men are *not* generally happy in their married life, *are* they? They are not in biographies, at any rate. Sometimes I haven't been able to help wishing I did something myself—wrote, too, for preference, or at least painted, or composed. I don't want you later on to feel in moments of irritation that you have married an 'outsider.'"

Robert Cunninghame laughed. He *was* clever; he was aware of it, and it would have been affectation to deny the assertion; but he was conscious that in Edith Mallory he had a *fiancée* whom men more celebrated still might have easily envied him. Beauty, birth, position, and a charming temperament—what more was to be desired? He was flattered, indeed, that a girl who had had the reputation of being so unapproachable, and whom six months back he had contemplated with something like awe himself, should care for him to-day so deeply as to have the doubts and desires she had expressed.

"Sweetheart," he said, "will it let me down

dreadfully in your estimation if I own to you that I am occasionally the least bit in the world sick of literature, and all that pertains to it—that it is a positive relief to me to talk of something else?”

“I shouldn’t have supposed it from the way you write. Your essays, your reviews, breathe—what shall I say?—a *reverence* for your work.”

“Oh! that’s sincere enough,” he answered. “I have always taken my work seriously, and I hate to see amateurs play at it. The slipshod novel, the pot-boiler’s attempt at biography, chafe me beyond endurance. But one does want to get away from it sometimes, for all that. It is like London. I couldn’t live anywhere else; but I like a visit to the Continent or the sea, too.”

She changed the conversation. Tact was her chief attribute, and she saw he was getting bored by it. She spoke of the last play, of the previous night’s ball; but in her inmost mind a vague unrest still lurked, and it was this vague unrest, this ambition to be worthier of Robert Cunninghame’s love,

that was responsible for the one mistake—worthy to be called so—of her life.

She designed to write a novel. The project took root in her brain, and developed. He hated amateur's novels. Yes; but so did she. It was not vanity, to be sure, that she could write a book immeasurably superior to the class of literature to which he referred. She was well and widely read; a girl who had thought, and had been educated in the broadest sense of the word. Assuming that she gave six months to the achievement of her plan, might she not put forth something that would surprise and please him beyond measure? She thought she might.

In six months they were to be married. She would, as far as was practicable without giving rise to comment, retire from society during that period. Her mother, she supposed, must be in her confidence—to her the secret must be divulged—and, by dint of early rising and assiduous labour, *A good Wife* might appear in the market, before the wedding morning dawned.

She had thought of the title. More, the plot

had been simmering indefinitely in her imagination a long while—long before she ever dreamed of writing it. Not, let it be stated clearly, but that the plot was a good plot, coherent, probable, and even original to an extent. It was no namby-pamby love-story that Miss Mallory projected, no sickly, sentimental romance. She shuddered at that grade of fiction as uncompromisingly as the critic, essayist, and author to whom she was affianced, and often struck horror to the breasts of librarians at the watering-places she visited by her summary rejection of popular novelists who ran into their five and six editions. No; in conception Miss Mallory's novel was refined and scholarly. Very well.

Her courage did not fail her, though when her task was commenced she found difficulties she had been far from anticipating. Between the conception and the execution lies the artist's *pons asinorum*. She worked nobly, and stuck to her desk like the brave-hearted woman that she was.

"You don't seem to go out so much as you did," Cunninghame would say at times. And she would

reply with some evasion, consoling herself for the unpleasantness of having a secret from him by the remembrance of the delight that lay in store.

How his face—that thin, intellectual face of his—would brighten when she told him her news at last! She would wait till he had read the book, and given it a meed of praise, before she confessed, and then—— She laughed in anticipation.

Well, one need not detail all the stages of her literary apprenticeship. Suffice it to say that at length *A 'good Wife* was finished; still more, that it even found a publisher.

Not at first. Oh no! It travelled from one house to another before it met with acceptance. But it *was* accepted, and it appeared, just as she had proposed to herself, two or three weeks before the day fixed for the marriage.

It looked beautiful. The cover was a work of art, and the type and paper all the authoress could have wished. She had passed printers' errors in correcting the proofs, of course—was there ever anybody

so fortunate as not to do so? But, chagrin her though they did when she skipped through her advance copies, the lesser annoyance was outbalanced by the great joy. Her book! her own book! And even now a copy lay on Cunninghame's desk, awaiting review.

It was published anonymously. That was part of her "surprise." He was not to have a suspicion of the writer's identity till she could cry, "You say *A good Wife* is so-and-so, or so-and-so; well, it is by me." She scanned the journal for which he wrote, with hungry eyes, every morning, looking for the familiar title; but day after day she lay it down in disappointment—no review had appeared. It almost seemed at last as if they would be married first, and that her revelation would be made in the character of his wife. She had not planned it so; it fretted her.

One afternoon, when Cunninghame dropped in to the little house in Green House at his usual hour, her impatience outran her discretion.

"Have you been reading much lately?" she

asked; "I haven't seen you mention any of the new books I know."

"For instance?" said Cunninghame, lazily.

"Well, there's *A good Wife*; have you opened that?"

"Yes," he said; "I looked at it the other day."

"What are you going to say about it?" Her fingers worked in her lap nervously, and she kept her eyes fixed upon the fire. She dared not trust herself to look at him as she put the question; almost she dreaded to hear his voice when he should answer.

"I'm not going to say *anything* about it," he replied; "I never slate novices; I haven't done that since I was a boy."

"You think it so bad?" There was a knot in her throat as she forced herself to speak again—or was it her heart beating there? She feared she was going to faint.

"It's very stupid, don't you think?" he said, casually. "I found it so. The woman—of course it *is* a woman—hasn't the faintest idea how to work

her notion out, and her characters are dummies. By the way, I have a box for *Romeo and Juliet* for Thursday night. You'll both be able to come?"

"I should like to very much," murmured Miss Mallory. "We aren't dining anywhere, and mamma will be pleased. Might I trouble you to pass me that fan? Thanks. It is abominably warm in this room. I've felt it all day."

She was not brilliant during the half-hour that passed before he rose to leave, but she was collected and conversational. Nobody would have dreamed there was anything amiss with her, and certainly the man who loved her did not. She discussed topics in which she had not the faintest interest with even an approach to animation, and when he kissed her and went, her expression was amiable to the end.

As the street-door closed she got up and slowly mounted the stairs. Her steps lagged heavily; her room seemed situated at an unattainable distance; but she reached it at last. Then she locked herself

in, and flung herself on the bed, and sobbed her soul out in an abandonment of misery and shame.

She was mortified beyond endurance, disgusted with herself—angry, passionately, vehemently angry with *him*. She did not reason yet—she did not care to reason; she only felt that he had humiliated her frantically, cruelly—that it would be an abasement and an agony ever to see his face again.

The paroxysm passed, and she began to think more calmly. She went to the glass, and sighed at the ravages caused by her tears. Her eyes were swollen out of her head; her nose—and she was rather vain of her nose—was an uncompromising pink. This was the handiwork of Robert Cunninghame she told herself, bitterly. This was how he had repaid the devotion which had prompted her to make herself worthier of him, and to gain his applause. And she was to marry him next week! Could she? Should she?

She was normally a sensible girl, as has been said elsewhere, and it was not long before she decided that she would be an even greater fool than

she had been during the last six months were she to throw him over, and thus pull that little pink nose to spite her face. She loved him, and *he* loved her. Her folly was past and done with; what she had to do now was to endeavour to forget it, and to let things take their course as if it had never happened.

But never, close as the union is between them to-day, has Mrs. Cunningham ever had the courage to confess to her husband that she once attempted to shine in his own hemisphere, and I believe she will carry the little harmless secret with her to her grave.

"My wife is not a literary woman," Cunningham sometimes says to a friend. "Very fond of literature—an admirable critic—but doesn't write. No, no!"

And then, if the friend is an observant man, he may remark that Mrs. Cunningham smiles a rather wistful smile, losing for an instant the expression of contentment which is generally so noticeable in her face.

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

October 1895.

Tauchnitz Edition.

Latest Volumes:

(Continued from page 2 of cover.)

Beyond the Dreams of Avarice.

A New Novel by Sir Walter Besant.
2 vols.

Too Late Repented.

A New Novel by Mrs. Forrester.
1 vol.

In the Old Chateau.

A New Novel by Richard Henry Savage.
1 vol.

They call it Love.

A New Novel by Frank Frankfort Moore.
2 vols.

The Story of Bessie Costrell.

A New Novel by Mrs. Humphry Ward.
1 vol.

Lord Ormont and his Aminta.

A New Novel by George Meredith.
2 vols.

A Tug of War.

A New Novel by Mrs. Hungerford.
1 vol.

(Continued on last page of cover.)

October 1895.

Tauchnitz Edition.

Latest Volumes:

(Continued from page 3 of cover.)

In Market Overt.

A New Novel by James Payn.

1 vol.

The Vagabonds.

A New Novel by Margaret L. Woods.

1 vol.

Scylla or Charybdis?

A New Novel by Rhoda Broughton.

1 vol.

At Heart a Rake.

A New Novel by Florence Marryat.

2 vols.

Clarence.

A New Novel by Bret Harte.

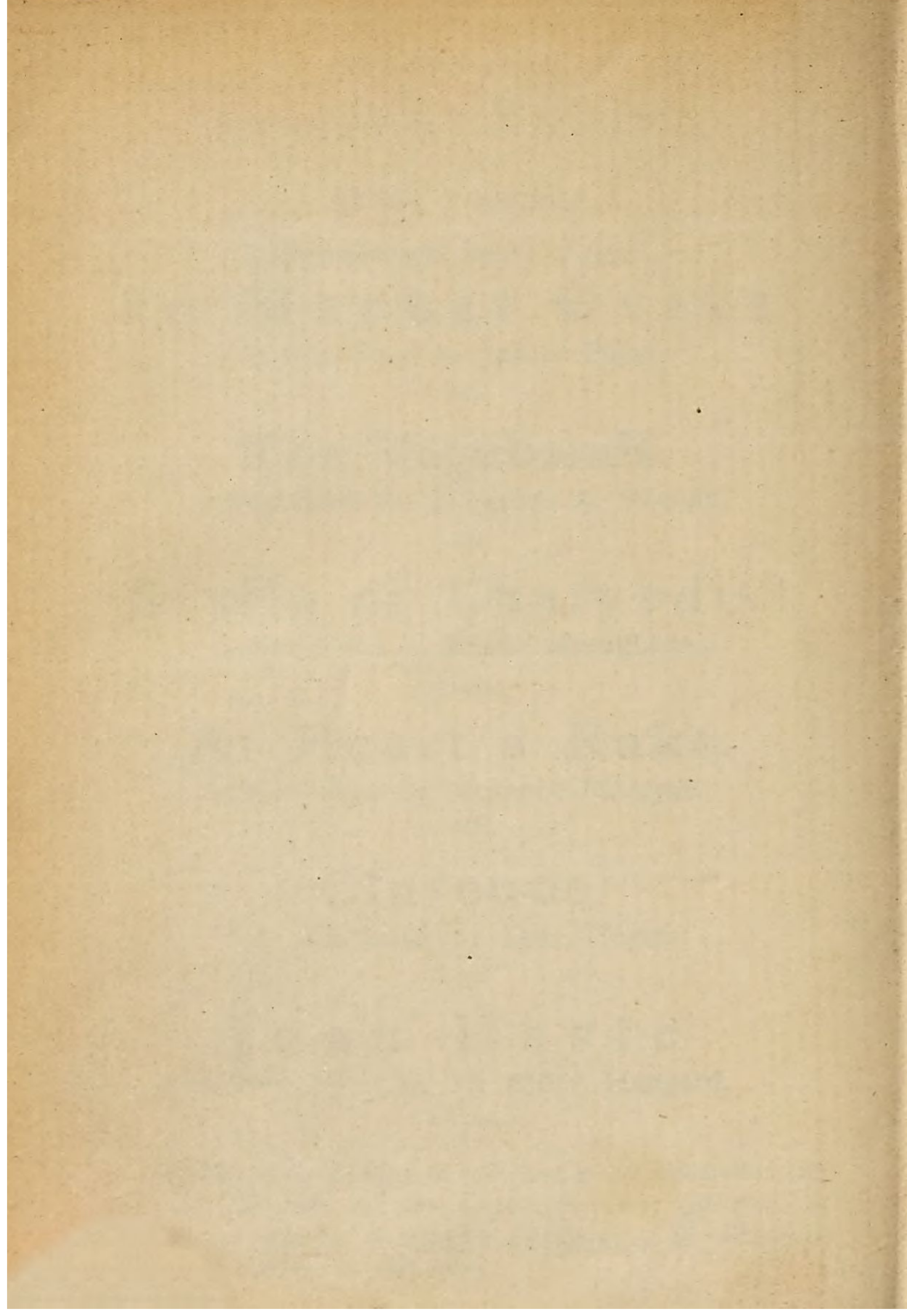
1 vol.

Joan Haste.

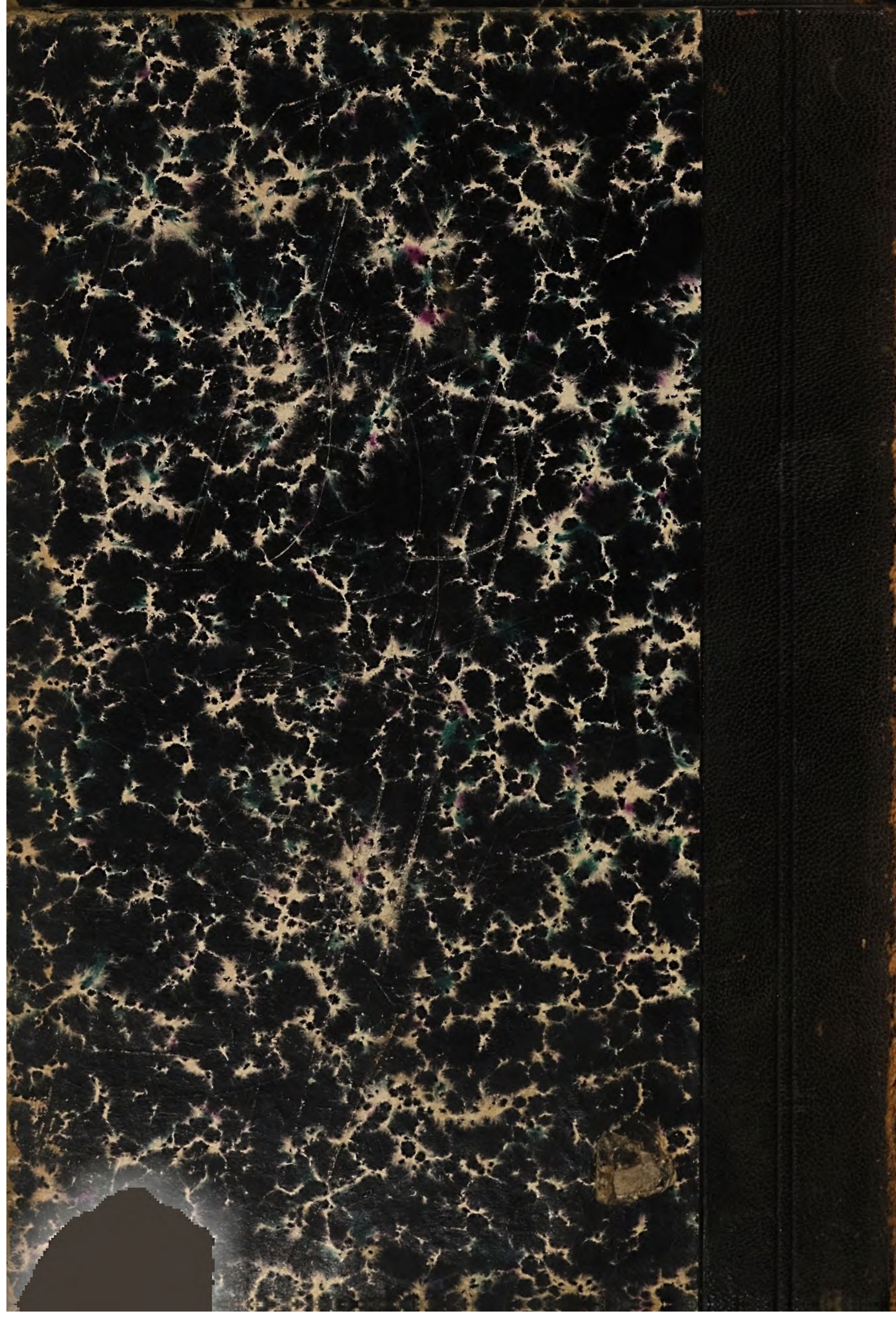
A New Novel by H. Rider Haggard.

2 vols.

The Tauchnitz Edition is to be had of all Booksellers and Railway Libraries on the Continent, price M 1,60. or 2 francs per volume. A complete Catalogue of the Tauchnitz Edition is attached to this work.



F.X. BEER, Kgl. Hofbuchbinde
MÜNCHEN
Weinstrasse N^o 18, n.



Philips, F. C.

A devil in nun's veiling, and other stories

Bd.: 29.

Leipzig 1895

P.o.angl. 276 q-29

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11664919-3